PLAYSTATION next 3

100% unofficial PlayStation 3 magazine

FIRST SCREENSHOTS
HALF-LIFE 2
This Freeman is anything but

EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON
RESISTANCE FALL OF MAN
Mankind's last stand will be in Grimsby?

Assassin's Creed

WORLD EXCLUSIVE
BECOME A PRINCE AMONG HITMEN IN UBISOFT'S ASTONISHING NEXT-GEN ADVENTURE

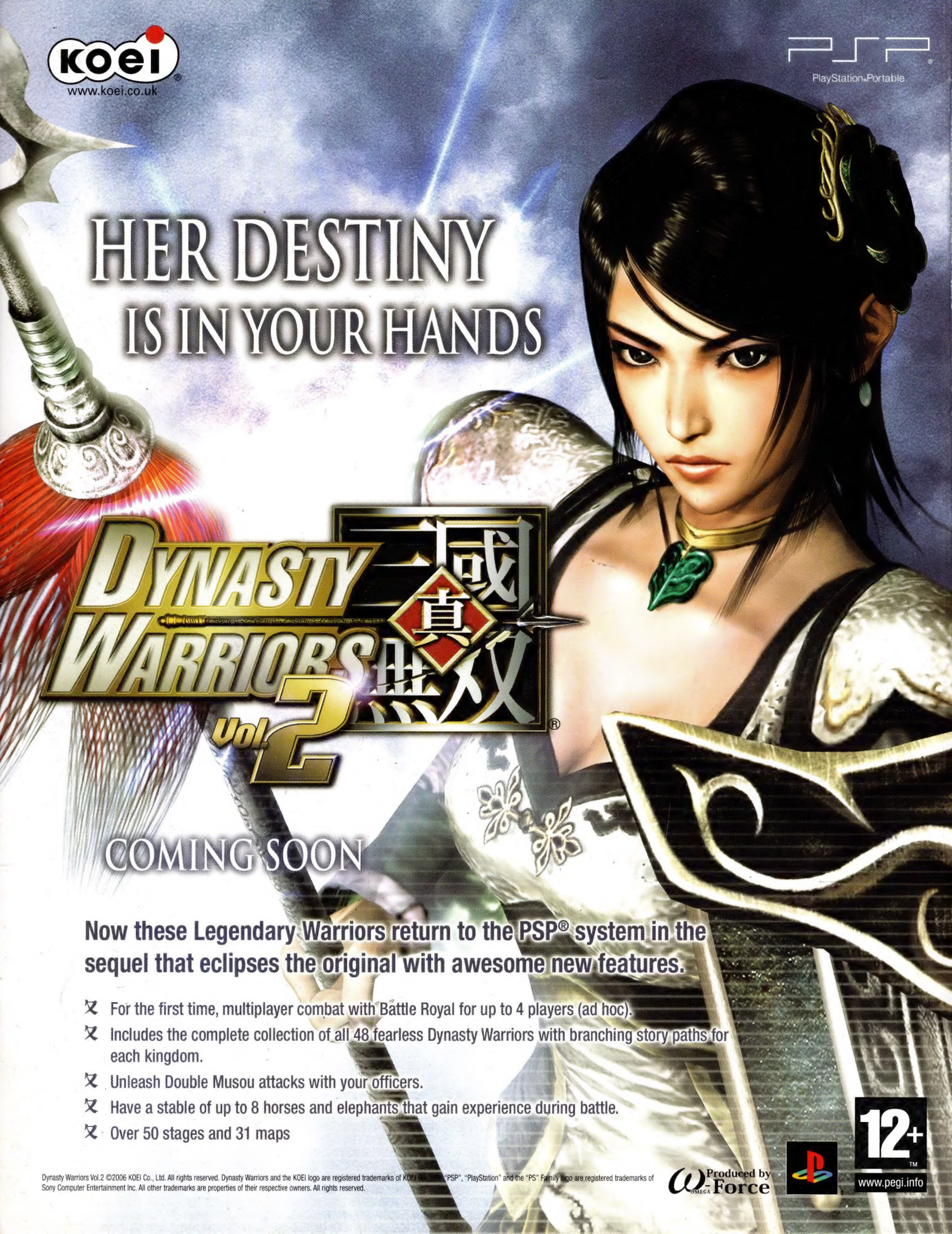
Blu-ray Disc
ALL THE LATEST MOVIES REVIEWED!

INCLUDES FREE DVD

www.next3.co.uk

EVERY ISSUE | BRAND NEW PS3 GAMES | CUTTING-EDGE NEWS & ANALYSIS | IN-DEPTH FEATURES

ISSUE 2 £4.00
IMAGINE PUBLISHING
9 771751 455005 02


KOEI
www.koei.co.uk
PlayStation Portable
HER DESTINY
IS IN YOUR HANDS
DYNASTY WARRIORS 真三國無双 Vol.2
COMING SOON
Now these Legendary Warriors return to the PSP® system in the sequel that eclipses the original with awesome new features.
For the first time, multiplayer combat with Battle Royal for up to 4 players (ad hoc).
Includes the complete collection of all 48 fearless Dynasty Warriors with branching story paths for each kingdom.
Unleash Double Musou attacks with your officers.
Have a stable of up to 8 horses and elephants that gain experience during battle.
Over 50 stages and 31 maps
Dynasty Warriors Vol.2 ©2006 KOEI Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. Dynasty Warriors and the KOEI logo are registered trademarks of KOEI Co., Ltd. "PSP", "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks are properties of their respective owners. All rights reserved.
Produced by Omega Force
12+
www.pegi.info

The next-generation PlayStation magazine

We are next3

FEATURED IN THE SECOND ISSUE

"Draw your sword and folk will run, scream, freeze or just fall over"

Exclusive

ASSASSIN'S CREED

64 Become a prince among hitmen in Ubisoft's astonishing new adventure

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT...

The Cost Of Next-Gen Gaming

46 Is £425 too much for the PS3? We investigate what you get for you money.

NEXT MEDIA

PS3 Pre-Orders

14 Is it possible to pre-order a PS3 yet? How much will it cost? All is revealed...

FEATURED...

Talking 'Bout Next Generation

54 Just what can we expect from the next generation of gaming?

The History Of PlayStation

114 How did the world's favourite games console get to where it is today?

PLAYSTATION 3

100% DEDICATED TO PLAYSTATION 3

EVERY NEW GAME

NEWS & FEATURES, PS3 MULTIMEDIA, NETWORKING, INTERVIEWS & MORE!

Next3 is the UK's only 100% dedicated PlayStation 3 magazine

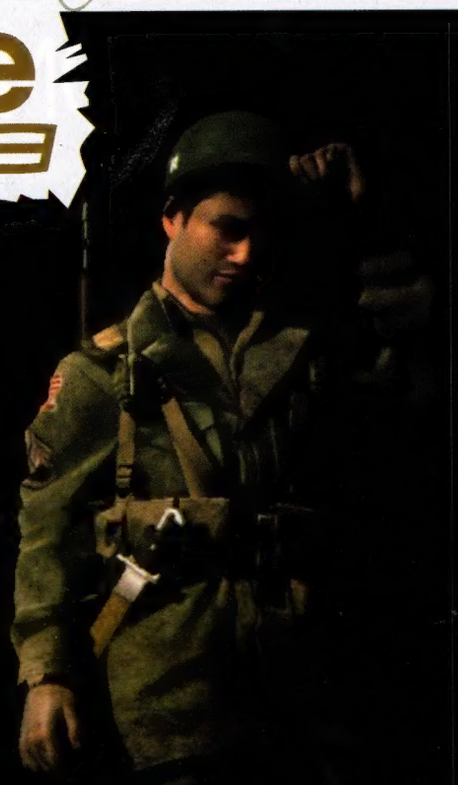
Contents next3

Next-generation gaming at its best

next3 hype
Coming soon to PS3

THE GAMES

96 Sonic The Hedgehog
102 Final Fantasy XIII
103 Need For Speed Carbon
104 Rainbow Six Vegas
106 Lair
106 The Outsider
107 Indiana Jones 2007
108 Unreal Tournament 2007
110 Frontlines: Fuel Of War
111 Genji 2
111 Rayman Raving Rabbids
111 Turok
112 Interstellar Marines
112 WarDevil: Enigma



Virtua Fighter 5
72 The beat-'em-up with added balance

Half-Life 2
78 Six games for the price of one? You heard us!

Goddam! Hoo-har! Good for? etc.

Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway

90 A bridge too far for Ubisoft's ambitious new World War II shooter?

Resistance: Fall Of Man
84 Brand new shots of PS3's first killer app

Your team on next3 Bringing you the best advice from the experts...

Nick Jones
Turning his back on everything he once loved: Beer Pong, Frisbee and a rather special fruity lager have all been left by the way side. What has caused him to abandon such delights? A little treat known as elevensies which he now has it at eleven, twelve, one and strangely seven. Just who is this enigma known as Jones?

Keith Hennessey
After just two games of the new Premiership season, Keith sits proudly atop the Next3 fantasy football league. Keith puts his success down to his management style which he describes as, "maverick". Everyone else considers it to be more 'goose' than 'maverick'! (Spot the brilliant *Top Gun* reference above and win a prize.) (Not really!)

Thomas Leclerc
Tom became Craig's new dad this month. That's right, and, er, sorry Craig's old dad, you've been superceded. Tom's fatherly duties include having his face stroked by his son, doling out the obligatory pocket money and giving advice on 'the ladies'. Tom is qualified to do only one of these jobs. Just look how smooth his skin is.

Craig Gilmore
There's only one thing that Craig hates more than chocolate Hob Nobs. He despises horror movies, especially those with zombies in them. He really hates the fact that they're seen as satirical (the zombies) and that everyone thinks they're cool. He really loves his nickname 'Happy'. All or some of the above is sarcasm.

FROM THE ACCLAIMED STUDIO, PRODUCTION I.G CREATORS OF *KILL BILL & BLOOD*

攻殻機動隊 S.A.C. 2nd GIG

GHOST IN THE SHELL

VOLUME 5

"STAND ALONE COMPLEX"

© 2004-2006 Shirow Masamune Production I.G/KODANSHA All rights reserved. Illustrated by Makoto Shimomura.

"GHOST IN THE SHELL SCORES VERY HIGHLY INDEED IN THE ANIME STAKES."
- DVD MONTHLY

"EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH STANDARD OF STAND ALONE COMPLEX IS MAINTAINED IN THIS COLLECTION OF EPISODES FROM THE SECOND SEASON."
- HOMECINEMA CHOICE ★★★★

"AWESOME" - ★★★★ BURN MAGAZINE

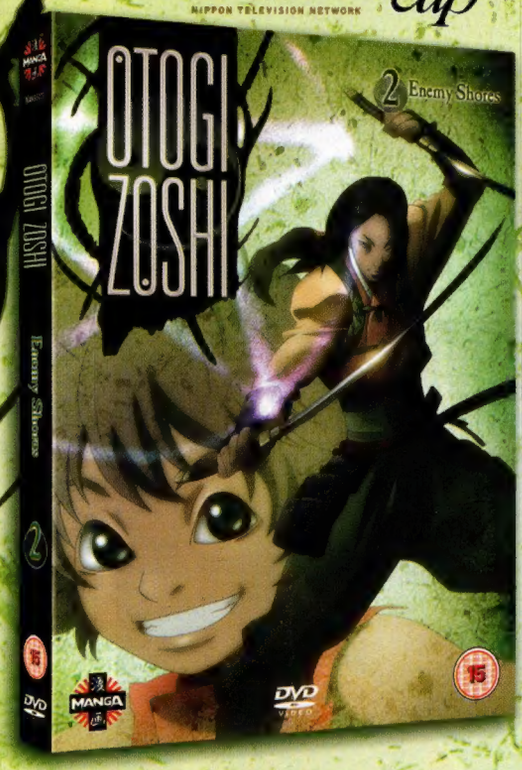
BASED ON THE GROUNDBREAKING FILM GHOST IN THE SHELL BY MAMORU OSHII
攻殻機動隊 S.A.C. 2nd GIG
VOLUME 5
GHOST IN THE SHELL
"STAND ALONE COMPLEX"
MANGA
DVD VIDEO

OTOGI ZOSHI

© IG / VAP / NTV

Volume 2
Enemy Shores
Episodes 6-9

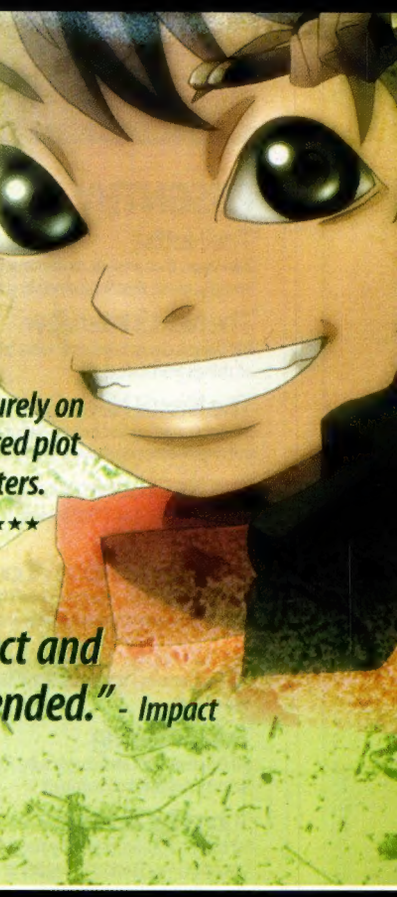
NTV NIPPON TELEVISION NETWORK vap



"Otogi Zoshi is the kind of anime to get excited about." - AintItCoolNews.com

"Otogi Zoshi will; draw you in, purely on the strength of its well-constructed plot and genuinely intriguing characters. Well worth checking out." - SFX ★★★★

"Definitely one to collect and unreservedly recommended." - Impact



漫画 MANGA

www.manga.co.uk

OUT ON DVD 4TH SEPT 2006

Virgin megastores

virginmegastores.co.uk

Contents

All the latest news, features and info!

nextmedia

PS3 News as it happens

14 This Christmas' hottest electronics will also be the hardest to get - make sure you get one

HOW CAN YOU GET ONE?

PS3 pre-ordering

HOTLIST: TOP TEN THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED IN THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION 3 THIS MONTH **p26**

THE BIG SCREEN

Resident Evil 5

30 Taking a closer look at one of PlayStation 3's most anticipated games

ESSENTIALS

The Hotlist
26 Pages that are hot to the touch. Not literally, mind, that would be very silly

The Next3 Interview
52 Valve's Doug Lombardi talks to us about all things Half-Life 2

The Next3 NewsGrid
37 Good, bad, expected, unexpected, putting the month's news in context

The Next Generation
38 All the latest on PlayStation 3's triple-A titles

Everyone's Talking About...
46 Chewing the cud on some of the videogame world's most pertinent issues

Send/Reply
10 Your letters - it's about PlayStaion 3 and all that

Twitch Gaming
50 Opinion, fact and conjecture from Next3's resident coloumnist

Subscribe to Next3
62 Never miss an issue of your (now) favourite PlayStation 3 magazine

Blu-ray Reviews
122 A new generation of gaming also ushers in a new generation of movies

Next Month
128 Find out what we have in store for you next issue. Clue: it's even better

THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS...

PS3 RELEASE SCHEDULE

42 Find out when the biggest (and not so biggest) games are coming out on PS3. And some other stuff as well

BLU MOVIES

Blu-ray Disc

NEXT-GEN BLU-RAY MOVIE REVIEWS

Next-generation movies rated for your viewing pleasure

122 Black Hawk Down
123 A Knight's Tale
123 Stealth
124 Robocop
124 The Punisher
124 Saw
125 Basic Instinct 2
125 Blu-ray round up

NEVER MISS AN ISSUE OF next3 SUBSCRIBE
TURN TO PAGE 62 FOR FULL DETAILS

next3

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House
33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth
Dorset BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Website: www.next3.co.uk

Thank you for supporting Imagine Publishing – a new independent specialist magazine publisher where quality, innovation and excellence are paramount. We hope you enjoy the magazine.

Magazine team
Editor in Chief Nick Jones
next3@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586211

Art Editor James Davies

Asssociate Editor Keith Hennessey

Staff Writers Tom Leclerc, Craig Gilmore

Sub Editors Helen Laidlaw, Luke Smith

Contributors
Simon Griffin, Aaron Asadi, Ryan King, Ben Biggs, Jon Denton, Luke Albigés, Matt Handrahan

Pictures
Cover image: Assassin's Creed © 2006 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Assassin's Creed, Ubisoft and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the US and/or other countries

Advertising
Digital or printed media packs are available on request

Advertising Director Scott Caisley
☎ 01202 586444
scott.caisley@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Advertising Manager Felicity Mead
☎ 01202 586421
felicity.mead@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Snr Advertising Sales Executive Mark Maclean
☎ 01202 586420
mark.maclean@imagine-publishing.co.uk

International
Next3 is available for licensing. Please contact the International department now to discuss partnership opportunities

International Manager Cathy Blackman
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
Email: licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions
☎ +44 (0) 870 787 9817
Email: next3subs@imagine-publishing.co.uk
13 issue subscription (UK) – £41.60

Circulation
Circulation & Export Manager Darren Pearce
Tel: 01202 586200

Production
Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Founders
Managing Director Damian Butt
Finance Director Steven Boyd
Creative Director Mark Kendrick

Printed by
Wyndeham Heron, The Bentall complex, Colchester Road, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex CM9 4NW
Distributed by Seymour Distribution, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT
☎ 0207 429 4000

Disclaimer
The publisher cannot accept responsibility for any unsolicited material lost or damaged in the post. All text and layout is the copyright of Imagine Publishing Ltd. Nothing in this magazine may be reproduced in whole or part without the written permission of the publisher. All copyrights are recognised and used specifically for the purpose of criticism and review. Although the magazine has endeavoured to ensure all information is correct at time of print, prices and availability may change. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.
PlayStation, PSOne, PlayStation 2, PS2, PlayStation Portable, PSP & PlayStation 3 are trademarks of Sony corporation in the United States and other countries.

next3

© 2006 Imagine Publishing Ltd

ISSN 1751-455X

KOEI®

www.koei.co.uk
www.tacticalrpg.com

Splitting up to save their home...

Reuniting to save the world!

ATELIER IRIS 2™

THE AZOTH OF DESTINY

Coming September

Feel the rush of the battle with the new Action Cost Time Battle System!

Switch main characters to experience both Eden and Belkhyde!

Master the Art of Alchemy to create everything you'll need from weapons to medicine!!

12+

www.pegi.info

ATELIER IRIS 2: The Azoth of Destiny ©2006 Gust Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. Licensed to and published by KOEI Co., Ltd. The KOEI logo is a registered trademark of KOEI Co., Ltd. ©2006 KOEI Co., Ltd. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks are properties of their respective owners.

TacticalRPG.com

GUST Incorporated

PlayStation®2

Choose next3 every month we'll guarantee you the bes

Welcome to

Hello

Welcome to the only magazine that's 100 per cent dedicated to PlayStation 3. This is the part where I'd like to introduce you to a few bits and pieces, explain parts of the magazine and tell you about our philosophy.

Next3 will be your guide to getting the maximum out of the world's most powerful gaming console; think of us as a trusted companion that will guide you on your journey through next-generation gaming.

The idea behind Next3 is that it will reflect exactly the capabilities of the PlayStation 3. So that's not just the games and the joys of high-definition gaming, but also all the other great technology that makes the PS3 a behemoth of cutting-edge gaming and multimedia technology.

We'll be telling you all about the latest games and Blu-ray movie releases, keeping you up-to-date with all the freshest PS3 happenings, and giving you step-by-step guides of how to use your PS3 to its fullest potential – and a lot more besides. And because we're the only mag that's 100 per cent PS3, we'll be able to give you the most in-depth coverage of the only console that matters.

So have a look around, relax and stay a while. Breathe it all in and let us guide you on the greatest journey of your gaming life.

Thanks for listening.

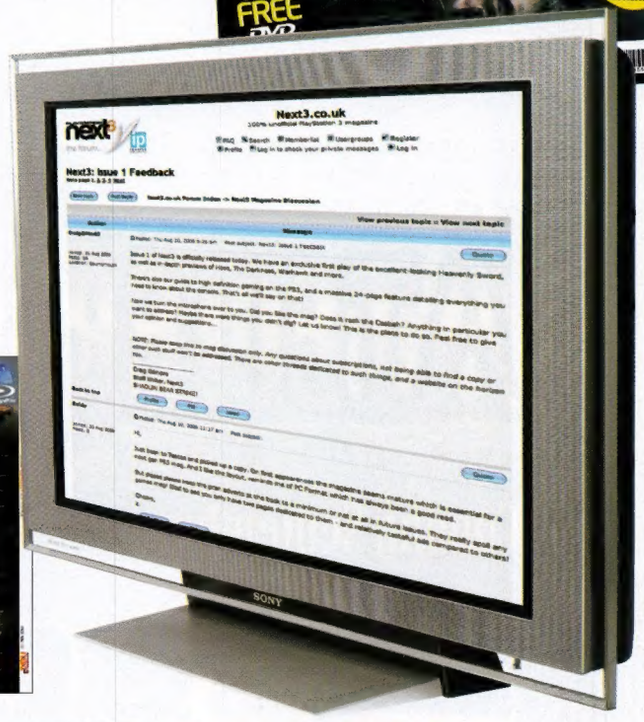
Nick

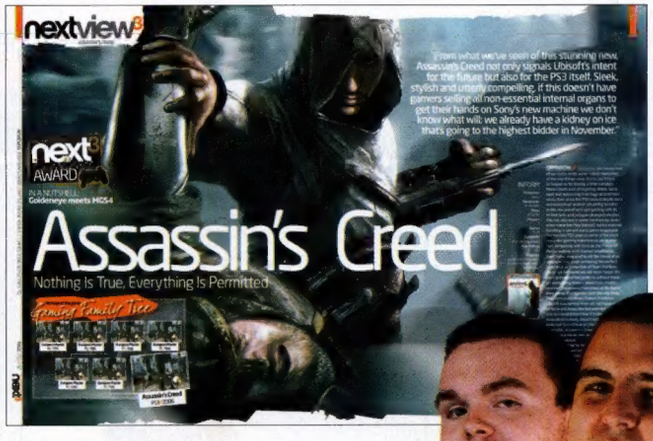
Exclusive

Be the first to find out all the latest on the biggest PlayStation 3 games. It sounds a bit cheesy but Next3 is all about keeping you up to date with the biggest PS3 games before anyone else. Be it as part of our news section or as an exclusive cover feature, you'll find the very latest on PS3 within these very pages.

Cutting Edge

Your PlayStation 3 is at the cutting edge of technology – use it. We'll help you realise its full potential with HDTV and peripheral reviews, the latest Blu-ray movie news and reviews and detailed guides showing you how to get the most out of the PlayStation 3's multimedia capabilities.

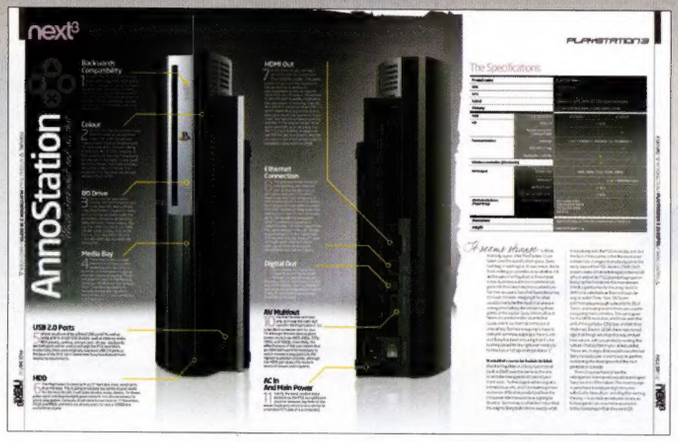




Expert Opinion

By reading Next3 you'll become one of the most informed people on the planet when it comes to PlayStation 3. This magazine is written by bona fide videogaming experts who love their gaming – probably a bit too much for their own good. Still, we'll fuel your passion for your hobby like no one else. Join us.

next3



Unrivalled Coverage

If you want the best then you'll find it here. We'll be covering PlayStation 3 games in the finest detail - our standard review will be four pages enabling us to tell you about every aspect of the games and ensuring you that you'll get the most accurate reviews possible. Only the very best games will be previewed in detail in Next3, as we act as a kind of magical quality filter.

Welcome To The Network

PlayStation 3 is all about networking - networking with PSP. With the Internet for gaming, downloads and friends on video chat, and networking with people with common interests. Next3 is about networking too - not only will we bring you all the latest news and reviews regarding PS3 online, but you'll also be able to play against the team and, by using your PS3, take part in discussions and talk to us direct through our forum.

Moving Images

From next issue you'll get a free DVD packed with the very best content. On it you'll find all the latest hi-res PS3 trailers, game reviews and team commentary, features and developer interviews and a load of exclusive bonus content to boot.

ISSUE 3 INCLUDES FREE DVD

send/reply

NEXT3@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

IF YOU WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT ANYTHING PS3 RELATED, ANYTHING NEXT3 RELATED, ANYTHING GAMING RELATED THEN WE NEED YOU TO GET WRITING...

NEXT3 FORUM

Join the Next3 forum and talk to loads of like-minded people

Go to www.next3.co.uk/forum/, register and get loads of benefits!

- ☑ **Get the latest PlayStation 3 headlines**
- ☑ Talk about anything PlayStation 3
- ☑ **Get advice and help from our experts**
- ☑ Talk directly to the Next3 team
- ☑ **Much more**

Bright future

Having read every scrap of info I could get my hands on regarding PS3 for the past year, as well as every minute tidbit on *Metal Gear Solid 4*, I have to say the future is looking bright for the PS3.

Compared with PS2's launch, PS3's looks poised to be an historic event. The launch titles trample over PS2's line-up in their big shiny Cell-processor-powered boots. Where PS2 had *Red Faction* and *F1'01*, Sony's newest baby has a feast of 15 fantastic looking games on standby as well as *Guns Of The Patriots* and *DMC4* waiting in the wings.

In all, the £425 price tag pales into insignificance for the quality of hardware and games we can expect. Roll on 17 November and roll on 2007 (*MGS4!*)

Mark Hooson, email

■ **Goodness, that's commitment. We'll be running a feature next issue that looks at the comparative line-ups of PS2 and PS3 so watch out for that. Oh, and here's one more tidbit of *MGS4* information: it runs in 1080p.**

Long in the Bluetooth

In your in-depth PS3 feature you alluded to the various uses to which the USB ports can be put, including a keyboard. Do you know of Sony plans to make its own keyboard for PS3, do you have any information such as an expected release date and price?

Also, I assume you are given a Bluetooth controller with your PS3, but how much are extra controllers expected to cost, and will they be available on the release date?

C Snow, email

■ **Chances are that Sony won't be making a PS3-specific keyboard, although it does already manufacture some pretty good (and pricey) PC ones. PS3 may be compatible with Bluetooth keyboards too. As for extra controllers, expect these to available on day one, although no price has been set yet. Best guess? £35-ish.**

Boomerang returns

I want to say that I'm disappointed that Sony changed the controller design. The only people complaining were the opposing systems' fanboys.

Ryan McGrory, Glasgow

■ **We liked the boomerang design too – it looked more comfortable than the bog-standard DualShock. However, isn't it about time Sony sorted out the decidedly average analogue sticks?**

Desperate times...

I'd like to comment on your first issue. Most of the things you covered were just page-fillers. On pages 74/75, for example, you attempt to describe what happens on launch day. I quote, "Before the television (TV?) is turned on, the box is put away and the excess rubbish is dumped."

I understand you must have been desperate for content but you're pushing it a bit. From arm's length the pages look attractive, I'll give you that. All that tiny text around many pictures of a colossal PS3. In fact I think you used a picture of that black PS3 on nearly every page, amid more preview guesswork. The price isn't too bad though, so I'll probably pick it up again, if only for the laughs you provide from some of those desperate articles. Keep on hypin'.

Luke, email

■ **Hey, we were just trying to describe the anticipation that you might feel upon unpacking your PS3 for the first time. As for guesswork in our previews, well, there's always going to be a certain amount of conjecture until we actually get to play the games in depth. Still, Next3 will obviously improve drastically once we start reviewing.**

4D or not 4D?

You have some kick-ass gear, and thanks to your Ultimate PS3 Shopping List and Are You HD Ready? articles I now know of a CRT HDTV and where to get it. You said CRT HDTVs don't have DVI or HDMI inputs but according to Samsung's website the WS32Z419D has an HDMI input. I have a few questions: How do USB cables recharge the controller? (USB carries signal not current.) What do you think Ken Kutaragi meant by 4D gaming? I think the time in game will be the time you set your PS3's clock to. When will *Final Fantasy XII* be released?

Darren, Conisbrough

■ **Okay, some answers. USB can carry power as well as data – many devices (mobile phones, PSP) can already be recharged using USB. Ken seems to love and work in his own little world, still, 4D gaming refers to on-demand gaming downloads. We think. And *FFXII* is out early 2007, although SquareEnix has yet to confirm a date.**

INFORM: GO TO WWW.NEXT3.CO.UK, SIGN UP AND GET TALKING WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE HOBBY TODAY!

P-3

FREE GAMES

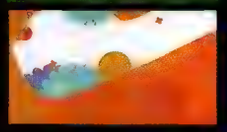
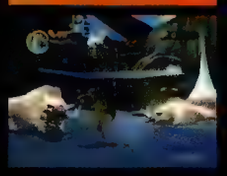
Free games forever

P3- The only mobile phone company with a unique package dedicated to gamers - is offering something new & exciting.
Free games forever.

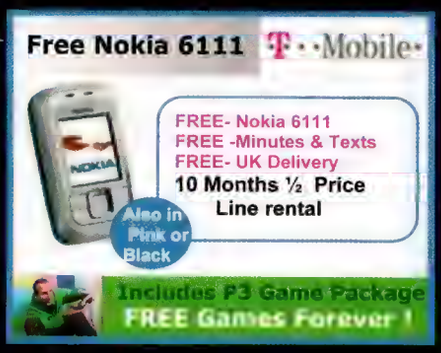
What's the catch? There is none.

Simply get your pay monthly mobile phone from P3. Choose one of the selected packages and enjoy free games.

1 FREE GAME EVERY MONTH - ANY GAME - ANY PLATFORM

E.g.-



+ Loads more on line...

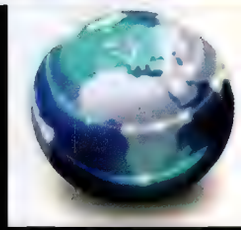
It's easy....

Visit - www.p3mobiles.com

Call - 0800 002 5016

Prices correct at time of going to press. 12 or 18 mths new mobile phone contract applies. Terms & conditions @ www.p3mobiles.com

P-3



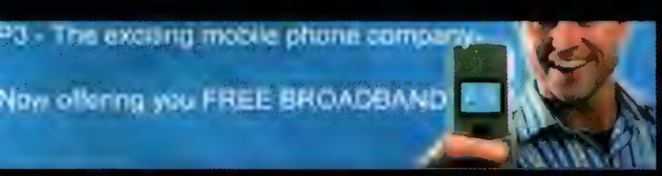
Free Broadband

For the ultimate gamers package why not combine with the P3 Broadband package and you can also enjoy FREE BROADBAND from P3

No catch - It's simple !

Just take your pay monthly mobile phone from P3 with one of the selected packages, and you can enjoy free broadband.
No waiting - You can start enjoying your free broadband shortly after your new pay monthly mobile phone is connected.

Even if you have a few months remaining with an existing ISP contract - Don't Wait !
Take your pay monthly mobile phone now and as soon as your current ISP contract expires we will connect you to your free broadband straight away.



It's easy .....

Visit - www.p3mobiles.com

Call - 0800 002 5016

P-3

Every One Else Is !

12 & 18 mths new mobile phone contract of £35 or more apply. BT landline required. Broadband subject to availability, compatibility & line survey, and there is a 2Gb usage allowance. See www.p3mobiles.com.

PLAYSTATION next3 Headline News

F.E.A.R. is well-respected in PC circles for its unmatched AI and gorgeous visuals.

F.E.A.R. FACTOR

PC shocker announced at Leipzig but there's more to come at TGS

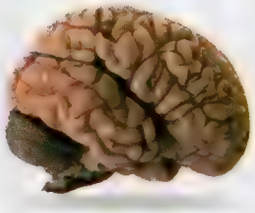
THE GOD of videogames is a merciful one: with one hand he gives and with the other he takes away. Continuing reports of PS3 developer criticism and high-profile game delays left us in a pit of despair but, just when we were at our lowest, Leipzig rolled around and gave us a lift. The boost came from an unexpected source: Vivendi, a publisher yet to disclose its full PS3 plans. At the German game convention it confirmed its outstanding PC shooter *F.E.A.R.* which was previously only slated for a console conversion on 360 but is also set to grace PS3.

Throwing you in at the deep end, you start the game as a rookie member of the First Encounter Assault Recon (F.E.A.R.) team, and have no clue who you are or what's in store. Even if you did know, nothing would prepare you for what takes place. You think seeing your dad dressed up in those stockings was scary? That's nothing compared to what you're about to witness. Those who've played the PC version will confirm its horror credentials and we're not going to print any spoilers here, suffice to say things turn gruesome as you experience many first encounters throughout the game and more than one with the 'girl in red'. Just what is it that makes little girls so scary? We're getting cold shivers just thinking about it.

Jokes aside, with numerous online multi-player modes, worryingly sharp AI and creaky destructible environments this is a stormer of a game and an excellent addition to Sony's PS3 line-up. If Vivendi treats the port with due care and attention, *F.E.A.R.* could well challenge the likes of *Resident Evil* for the PS3 horror crown. Speaking of *Resident Evil*, word is that more of Capcom's eagerly anticipated zombie fright-fest will be on show at this year's Tokyo Game Show. After the down-sizing of E3 TGS could be a much more significant event in the gaming calendar and so it won't come as too much of a shock to see Japanese developers saving new material and first hands-on play for their home crowd. Hopefully this fresh footage will give us much more to go on than the tired trailer still doing the rounds on the Internet. If this is the case then perhaps Japanese 360 players will take this opportunity to play the game because if game industry speculation turns out to be true then fifth Resi Evil instalment could be a PS3 exclusive in Japan.

It's all down to the fact that in Japan Xbox 360 is going down about as well as a fart in a lift. Poor console sales mean poor game revenues so, while Capcom has announced it is working on both Xbox 360 and PS3 versions of the game for Europe, if sales of Microsoft's machine fail to pick up in Japan the zombie-smashing game could find itself an exclusive resident of PS3 in the land of the rising sun. A confirmed exclusive and one another game hotly tipped to make a showing at TGS is *Metal Gear Solid 4*. While its creator, Hideo Kojima, has been dropping a few tasty info morsels lately about his hopes for the game including outputting in 1080p and experimentation with the motion sensor controller he has also hinted at a more revealing peek at his new game at TGS. Though an actual playtest is probably too much to ask, surely we deserve some updated footage and more in-depth game details. What's with the return of Raiden? Will we be revisiting Zanzibar Land? Is this really the end for Solid Snake? Though none of these questions were answered at Leipzig with the key note speech from Ken Kutaragi himself and a strong publisher showing, TGS is expected to blow the lid on many of PlayStation 3's most wanted games.

For all the latest up to the minute information on the Tokyo Game Show and everything else PS3 related be sure to visit our forum: www.next3.co.uk/forum.



THIS MONTH WE'VE LEARNED...

No one is taking PlayStation 3 pre-orders but soon it will be so. The annual electronic expo that is E3 is to be replaced by a slimmed-down version next year. **We can sell our gaming skills for top dollar to those less fortunate.** On the downside, three more games have been canned for PS3 including SmackDown Vs RAW 2007. **Sony's answer to Xbox Live Achievements are rumoured to be called Entitlements** and will be awarded for all manner of gaming feats. Sony Online has licensed Epic's Unreal Engine 3 for use on a new IP and Epic's head honcho Mark Rein says **PS3 is in better shape than the X360 was at this time last year.** On that note, 10,000 PS3 development kits have been sent to studios. Studio heads are lambasting game budgets for being too high while **developers are split over who will program for PS3.** Let's hope they've sorted it by next month.

Virtua Fighter 5 has been in Japanese arcades for some time, at TGS it'll be playable on PS3 for the first time.

next3Predicts
WHAT WE WANT FROM TGS

Sony Computer Entertainment boss Ken Kutaragi is all set to make the keynote speech at this year's Tokyo Game Show. His speech is entitled 'Next Generation by the PS3' so here is a rundown of the things we hope it will contain...

SONY ONLINE
We've heard relatively little about how Sony's revamped online games service will work, so perhaps Ken will fill us in on how PS3 will not only rival Xbox Live, but also better it. Entitlements, Friends List, GamerPoints... be prepared.

LAUNCH TITLES
We certainly have a good idea of the games we'll have nestled next to our PS3s on launch day but we're hoping an official list will be announced at TGS.

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?
Again, we're in a position to make an educated guess, but we still don't know the definitive list of cables, add-ons and remotes that will come bundled with both versions of the PS3.

SECRET PROJECTS
While there is a healthy number of games already in development for PS3, Sony has probably got another ace or two up its shelve. Go on, Ken, dish it... be your own best friend.

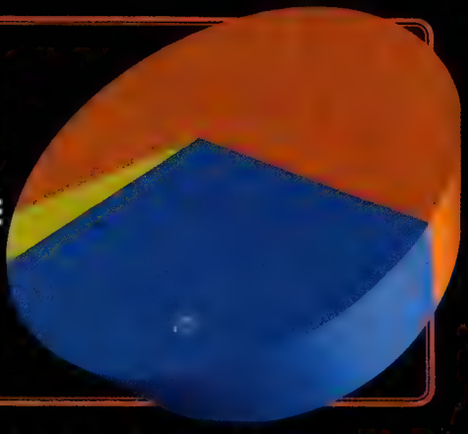
MONEY MATTERS
A few prices wouldn't hurt now would it - how much will games cost? What are we looking at in terms of peripherals prices? How much will it cost us to pre-order? We (and our bank managers) need to know.

DANCING GIRLS
Essential to any big announcement, if you are going to say something, why not say it in style huh?

ONLINE POLL
PLAYSTATION next3

WILL TGS CHANGE OPINIONS ON THE PS3?

YES	64%
NO	31%
DON'T KNOW	5%



THE BEST GAMES GO TOKYO
Games We Think Will Own TGS

Despite it being the Tokyo Game Show's 10th anniversary, it looks as though the numbers four and five have a great deal of significance for Sony. It's reassuring to know that with a wealth of fresh details, new demos and trailers, this year's TGS is looking very promising 'four' potential PS3 adopters.

F.E.A.R.
Looking a likely launch title, this will no doubt make an appearance in playable form. Be afraid.

DEVIL MAY CRY 4
We're keeping everything crossed that a playable demo will be on the show floor this year. Just the prospect is enough to make us cry too.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5
The PS3 is essentially an arcade machine in a box, so what better way to celebrate this fact than by playing one of the best arcade fighters ever made.

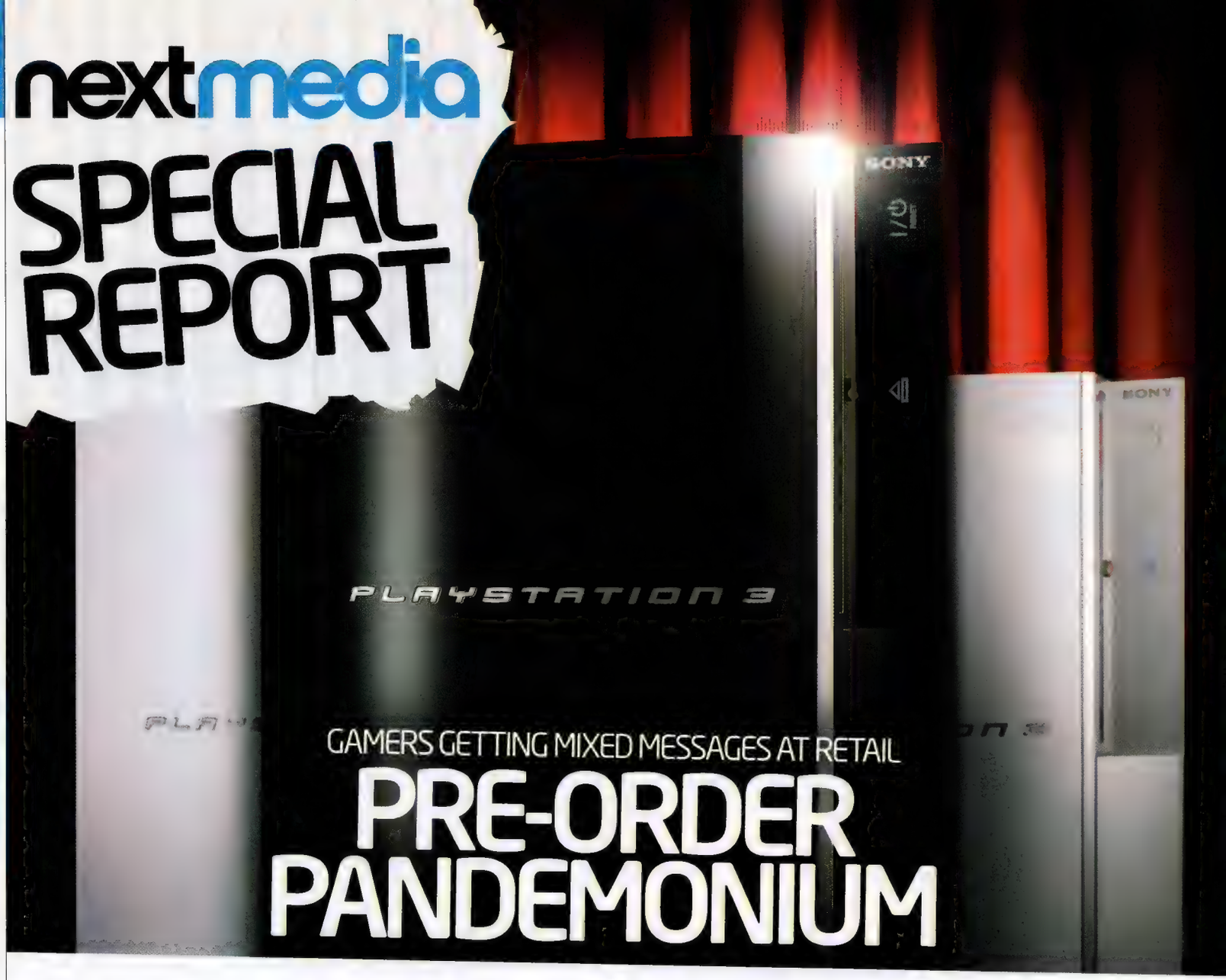
RESIDENT EVIL 5
We can't wait to give those brain-quaffing zombies a taste of what is to come on PS3 and the end of September is as good a time as any.

METAL GEAR SOLID 4
Hoping for a playtest but expecting a new trailer, we consider any new material from Kojima to be a blessing.

HALF-LIFE 2
After a big showing at Leipzig we suspect the boys at Valve will be working round the clock to ensure this impresses in the East.

The [illegible] trailer premiered at the Leipzig Games Convention in August - we're expecting more [illegible] at the TGS at the end of this [illegible]

SPECIAL REPORT



GAMERS GETTING MIXED MESSAGES AT RETAIL

PRE-ORDER PANDEMONIUM

DURING the course of a typical day we get asked a hell of a lot of questions. How much will PS3 cost? Have you played any PS3 games? What's that strange smell coming from under your desk? But by far the most frequently asked question is where can we pre-order a PlayStation 3? And we can fully understand why you ask, after the universally acknowledged fudge-show that was the Xbox 360 launch where consoles were harder to come by than a clean Frenchman, it only makes sense to secure your place in the queue as soon as possible. However, this task (as many of you have no doubt discovered) is easier said than done. When initial news of PS3 pricing plans and SKUs broke at E3, some retailers jumped the gun and began to take pre-orders before receiving any word from Sony about an official pre-order scheme, but this was quickly rectified (reports of wrist-slapping are as yet unconfirmed) and game stores shut up shop on PS3 pre-orders, replacing it with a rather disconcerting 'register your interest' system instead.

After hearing rumours about big-money deposits, supply worries and staggered SKU releases, we weren't content to sit and wait for a store email update that would probably arrive two weeks too late. So we went straight to the top and asked Sony about the current state of pre-order play. An official spokesman from the company told us that, after carefully monitoring, recent hardware launches of machines like the Xbox 360 and PlayStation Portable the Japanese electronics giant was extremely concerned about how quickly launch day shipments dwindled leaving many gamers disappointed. This was largely down to unscrupulous eBay coyotes placing numerous different pre-orders and then holding hardcore fans to ransom on various online auction sites. Therefore, in order to combat this disturbing trend, Sony plans to do things just a little differently with PlayStation 3.

Over the past few months the big 'S' has been in discussion with retailers about how to approach pre-orders. Not happy for stores to take thousands of orders it can't possibly fill on day one, Sony is asking stores to think about players rather than profit and limit the amount of pre-orders they take to ensure that everyone who truly wants a machine will have one nestled under their HD television screen on 17 November. In an effort to stop aspiring David Dickinson's out there from profiting, it has been suggested that stores request a deposit towards the higher end of the spectrum rather than allowing sweaty pocket change to be put down in several different retailers at once. In terms of SKUs, we have been able to ascertain that both the 20GB and 60GB units will be available on launch day, but by gauging interest at retail it appears early-adopter demand is overwhelming for the 60GB version and so we fully expect Sony to pander to the need accordingly – shipping far more premium versions of the console than the down-sized 20GB version.

Though talks with all major retail outlets are ongoing and specifics are yet to be finalised, Sony says we can "expect an announcement soon" with full details on the pre-order scheme. What is interesting to note however, is that unlike the launch of PlayStation 2 which was overseen by Sony itself the PS3 launch is an entirely store-based operation. This shifts the onus onto individual stores to uphold the rules of the pre-order agreement and play their part in ensuring the majority of people who genuinely want a PS3 should get one on the day of the launch.

SONY SAYS

Talking of pre-orders...

"We are currently in talks with stores about PS3 pre-orders and are close to an agreement. This system should ensure the majority of people who desperately want a machine at launch should get one. Expect an announcement soon."

In an attempt to appease our disgruntled readers, we hit the streets to investigate which retailers, if any, would let us pre-order a PS3...

THE HIGH STREET

(Last register interest)

Some high-street shops got over excited at the thought of the PS3 launch and started taking pre-orders a few months back, but quickly cancelled them for the 'register your interest' scheme currently in operation in Game, Argos, Dixons, Toys R Us and HMV. When talking to spokesmen from these retailers it was clear that they didn't know how the system would work. One helpful staffer (names have been omitted to protect the innocent) consulted an internal memo to give us what preliminary instructions were available and they did match what Sony told us. No pre-orders were to be taken at this time and no employee is to guesstimate how much the deposit will be or take any money as it could not guarantee to fulfil the order.

The two SKUs were a point of contention with stores in the dark over whether it will offer both versions of PS3. Many companies confessed that this might not make much difference as most interest been for the 60GB package – a promising sign. This shouldn't come as a surprise given that early adopters will most likely be hardcore PS fanboys. Another sentiment we picked up on was that after the initial shipment of units on 17 November there will be quite a wait before the second wave of hardware hits shelves. Even more reason for Sony to ensure those who desperately want a PS3 get one in the launch window. The

only store willing to give us a date when it plans to start pre-orders was Woolworths and that date is? September – so if all goes to plan you might be able to pre-order your system immediately after you've finished reading *Next3*.

From the well informed to the tragically clueless, some stores offered no info about pre-order plans or when we could expect to find out. It was interesting to see how many were eager to use the 'register interest' option to promote their own products – note to retailers, we're interested in PS3 not deals on buy one Barbie, get her horse half price.

THE SUPERMARKETS

Every little helps

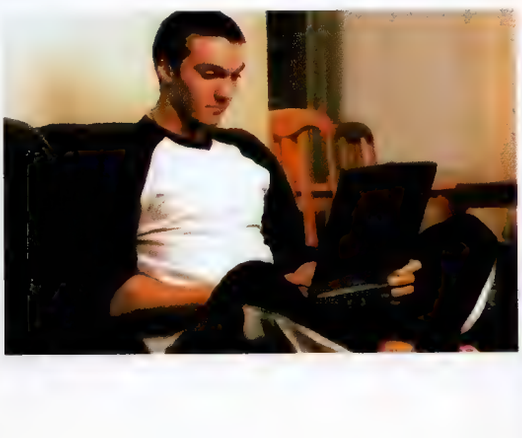
Come the launch of a new console, everyone has an opinion on how best to ensure victory in the race for a unit. Some trust the pre-order system, some hang out at indie retailers while others adopt unconventional methods. The launch of 360 saw more and more people trying their luck at the local supermarket and why not? Over the past few years these outlets have been waking up to the fact that videogame sales yield much bigger margins than Value beans, and so have been increasing multimedia sections to maximise profit potential. Lately, chains like Asda have been making a lot of noise about their intentions in the game sector so we thought we'd try our luck at pre-ordering a PS3 with our usual order of hollowed-out watermelon and chopped liver – it's probably best not to ask what we use them for.

Thinking bigger entertainment sections meant more focus on games and hardware sales, we approached Tesco, Asda and Sainsbury's to test the theory. Sadly it didn't pan out – while Tesco repeatedly told us that PS3 wasn't out yet... 'Yes, we know, we want to *order* it!' and Asda asked us to call back in a few months time when they had more information, only Sainsbury's confirmed that it was going to stock the system and is currently finalising a pre-order plan.

THE INTERNET

Pre-orders and absolutely no promise to fulfil them...?

Play.com has offered a PS3 pack that includes *F1'06*, *WarHawk* and *SingStar* for £549.99. Er, how can you offer pre-orders and bundle them with games that aren't officially confirmed as launch titles, and take money when you're yet to learn your allocation? This is all explained in a disclaimer that reads 'we're unable to guarantee delivery before Christmas'. And 'titles in this package maybe changed subject to availability'. Forgive us for being cynical but we're not sure everyone who takes up this offer will be breaking in their PS3 on 17 November. There's no such shenanigans from Amazon who, while displaying both SKUs, offers no option to buy or pre-order the console. Import site Lik-Sang is displaying a 'special pre-order' option next to PS3. The offer doesn't require a deposit and is reassuringly 'not binding' – so are we to consider this some kind of 'pre-pre-order'? Again the site doesn't guarantee when you'll receive your console but the option to choose your region is great if you intend to import games and Blu-rays from overseas.



Things you can do to maximise your chances of getting a PS3

TIPS FOR A HAPPY LAUNCH DAY

DO// Trade your unwanted consoles in now for store credit, you'll probably get more for it than when the new machine arrives.

DO// Sign up to every 'register your interest' scheme available – some stores are quicker with info than others.

DO// Draw on past experience, if a store has delivered the goods on launch day before, there's a good chance you can rely on it again.

DO// Try Woolworths it was the only one to give us a tentative date for PS3 pre-orders.

DO// Investigate avenues not often explored – ever pre-ordered your console from a supermarket before?

DO// Expect to put down a substantial deposit for your PS3.

DON'T// Expect to pre-order in any of the mainstream stores until an agreement is reached with Sony.

DON'T// Think you'll get a PS3 on launch day just because you've parted with money; various internet pre-order schemes might already be in operation, but they categorically state they can't guarantee delivery during the launch window.

DON'T// Expect to pick up a 20GB PS3 on launch day. Although some will be available, you'll probably need the Hubble telescope to find one.

DON'T// Order several machines from different stores – Sony is hoping to put measures in place to ensure sales are limited to one per customer.

QUICK-STOP SHOP FOR PRE-ORDERS

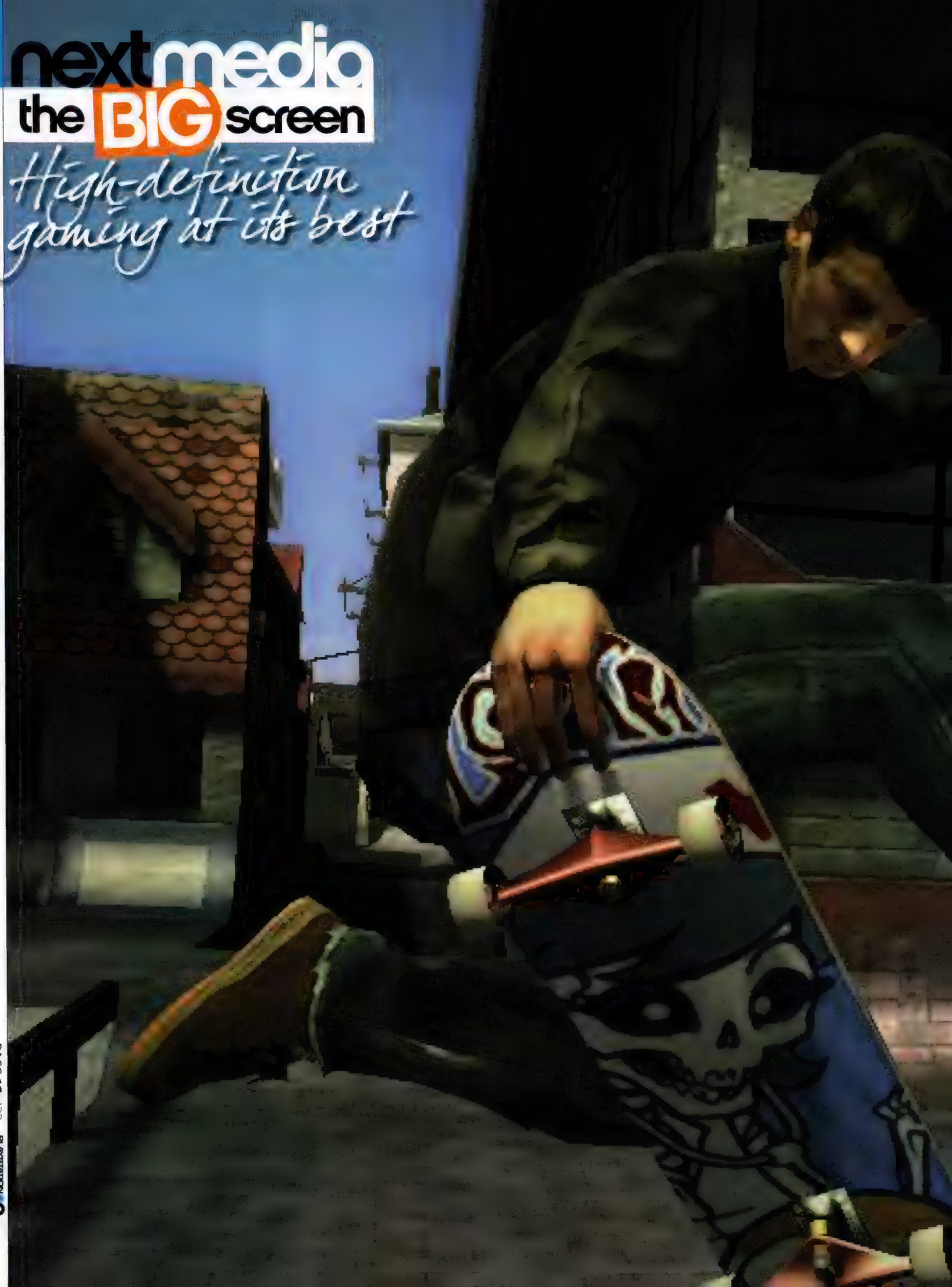
Who is willing to take your pre-orders?

	TAKING PRE-ORDERS?	RECOMMENDED?
Asda	✗	✗
Amazon	✗	✓
Argos	✗	✗
Comet	✗	✗
Dixons	✗	✓
Game	✗	✓
GameStation	✗	✓
HMV	✗	✓
Lik-Sang	✓	✗
Play.com	✓	✗
Sainsbury's	✗	✓
Tesco	✗	✗
Toys R Us	✗	✓
Virgin Megastore	✗	✗

next media

the BIG screen

High-definition gaming at its best

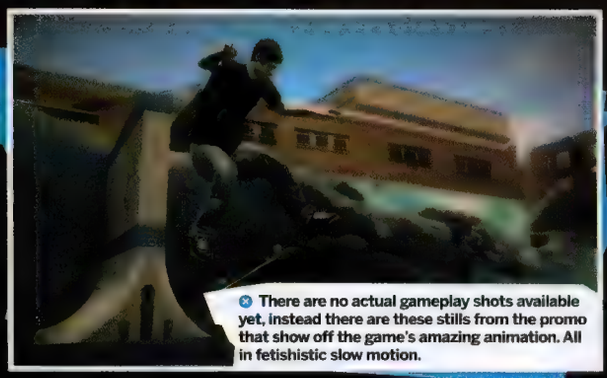


POSITIVE PROJECTIONS

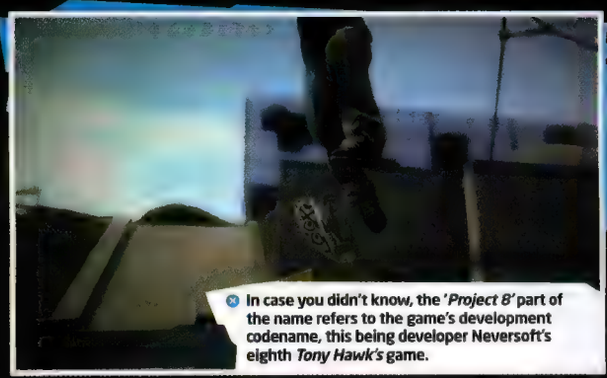
TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

OUT: AUTUMN

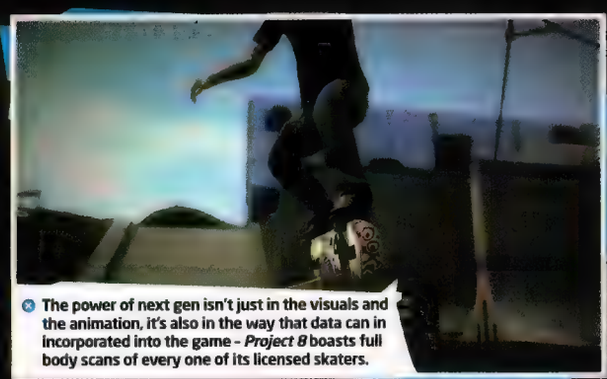
ABOUT// Look at it. Go on. Bask in the glory of PlayStation3's impressive visual grunt, displayed with the flair and grace only Tony Hawk can deliver. This isn't just a pretty rehash of previous games however, as it features a bunch of brand new elements to separate it from a series that, if we're honest, started to go a little stale after *Pro Skater 3*. It's noticeable that in the time we've spent poking around Activision's top franchise, not one mention has been made of new tricks – something generally indicative of a lazy update. Instead, the focus is very much on reinventing virtual skateboarding, introducing things like film and photo goals, impress the locals missions, full 3D body scans and a rejuvenated physics engine that truly boggles the mind with a far more realistic feeling of momentum and amazing ragdoll bails. Ouch.



There are no actual gameplay shots available yet, instead there are these stills from the promo that show off the game's amazing animation. All in fetishistic slow motion.



In case you didn't know, the '*Project 8*' part of the name refers to the game's development codename, this being developer Neversoft's eighth *Tony Hawk's* game.



The power of next gen isn't just in the visuals and the animation, it's also in the way that data can in incorporated into the game – *Project 8* boasts full body scans of every one of its licensed skaters.

PS3 IN GREAT SHAPE

Epic says PS3 is in 'a better place' than 360

AMID all the doom and gloom surrounding PlayStation 3 emanating from certain corners of the development world recently, Epic's Mark Rein came forward with a particularly interesting observation about the current state of play. Rein notes that PS3 development kits are now rolling out to developers and have been since before this year's E3, but Xbox 360 units were not yet available at the same period last year. "So Sony's actually maybe in a place vis-à-vis Microsoft in relation to launch."

So despite the constant griping about price, different SKUs and the like with the news that over 10,000 development kits have been shipped off to programmers, it appears that PlayStation 3 is indeed in a good place for developers right now. Rein even went on to add, "I know we're getting some great results with it back at our house, so I would expect other developers will be as well." The fact that influential developers such as Epic are taking the time to play around with the technology that's available within the casing of the PS3 and grinding out some extremely impressive results must come as reassuring news to all potential PlayStation 3 players, we're sure.

PS3 GAMES ALREADY USING UNREAL ENGINE 3

Don't believe us? You should, it's real...

All Points Bulletin
BIA: Hell's Highway
Coded Arms: Assault
Elveon
Fatal Inertia
Frontlines: Fuel Of War
Monster Madness
Project New Jersey
Stranglehold
Rainbow Six Vegas
Splinter Cell: Double Agent
Turok

SONY LICENSES UNREAL ENGINE 3

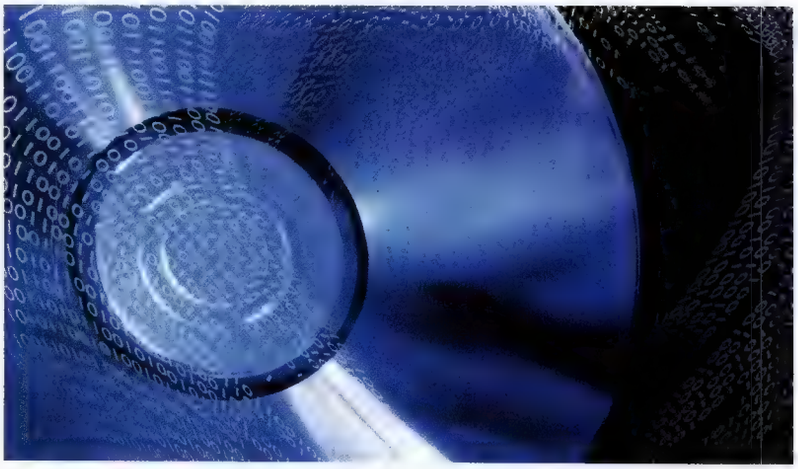
Sony online service gets Epic

Ask curly-haired cretin Jeremy Clackson about engines and he'll probably talk at you for the best part of three hours about performance, power and size – not to mention shoehorning in countless jibes at Johnny Foreigner. But ask him about Epic's Unreal Engine 3 and he'll probably stare blankly at you, speechless, and feeling more than just a little bit inadequate. On the other hand, were you to ask a game developer about Epic's next-gen titan of a game engine and they'll talk about it as though it were a beloved family member, singing its praises and preaching about how it will underpin a huge percentage of PS3 titles.

While the Unreal 3 technology certainly has a lot of fans already this month, it bagged a big one as Sony Online Entertainment announced it has licensed the engine for its future titles, including the ever-mysterious DC Comics MMORPG. SOE president John Smedley said, "Our development teams are very excited about harnessing the power of Unreal Engine 3. The combination of a top-notch graphics engine and a robust set of design tools will enable our teams to deliver incredible and innovative game content for next-generation consoles and the PC."

Sony Online in Austin is working with Warner Bros and Jim Lee on the DC game, and the fact that Unreal Engine 3 will be powering it makes the project even sweeter.

Just in...



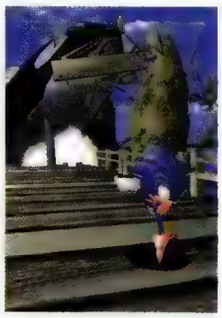
BLU IS FOR YOU

NVIDIA says Sony's next-gen disc is here to stay

NVIDIA co-founder Jen-Hsun Huang went on record this month to say that he fully expects Blu-ray to triumph in the next-gen disc war. In an interview with the *San Mercury News*, Huang asserted that Sony has "backed the right horse" in the next-gen race. Having previously worked with Microsoft on Xbox, he and his company are keen to show their dedication to Sony: 'I don't think that working with Sony is wrong. There is no way that is going to be wrong.'

Addressing issues concerning PS3's functions and ultimately its price, Huang believes the firm is justified in asking for that much more than Microsoft and Nintendo because the inclusion of Blu-ray is integral to the hardware lifespan of the console. "The important thing is you cannot announce a game console for the next ten years and not have Blu-ray," he said. "If I'm going to buy a next-generation game console, I'm going to buy a console with next-generation media." In an effort to play down outrage with the uber-price tag Huang went on to compare it with PS2's price point at launch. "PlayStation 2 was launched seven years ago in Japan at about $399. If you use inflation, it's the same price, approximately."

Huang believes Sony's decision to postpone PS3's launch and include Blu-ray was a "master stroke". He adds, "When that comes out it's going to look so much more advanced than last-generation game consoles". If Blu-ray is the powerhouse it promises to be, then PS3 should put both last-gen and other 'so-called' next-gen systems to shame.



HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Stop flapping, start thinking

As well as making GPUs for Microsoft's Xbox, in its fledgling years NVIDIA worked with Sega on the Dreamcast which, as most gamers will know, didn't have too happy an ending. After the Dreamcast drama and a few other failed products, the company was struggling for survival so Jen-Hsun Huang hired David Kirk as chief scientist from a small software developer called Crystal Dynamics. Kirk went on to help the company achieve great success, and the small development house he left went on to become quite a large outfit bringing us games like *Tomb Raider: Legend*. Fascinating.

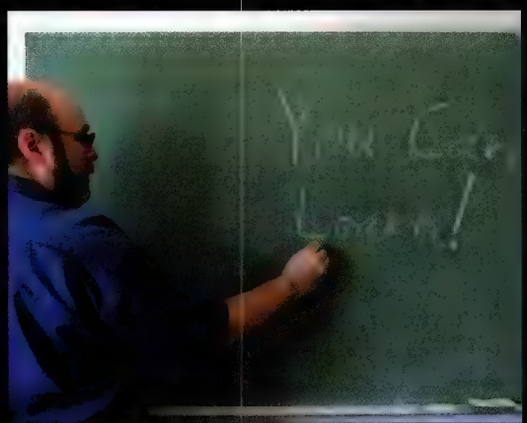
NVIDIA.

SELL THOSE SKILLS

Gaming tutoring on the rise

For most of us, teaching is not a dream career, in fact we can't think of anything worse than standing in front of a classroom full of kids all with bigger attitudes than Michelle McManus' cake bill. But how about preaching about the joys of hazing noobs and fragging terrorists?

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that some gamers are using their skills to earn big bucks, by becoming actual gaming tutors. The article refers to the likes of us (and probably most adolescent males) who have nothing better to do than sit around in our pants playing videogames and honing our skills charging an extortionate hourly rate to teach wannabe gaming gods. Poindexters that spend too much time in the office or playing the stock market can become the videogame heroes they always dreamed of being and the dropout game tutor gets his pockets stuffed with cash – everyone's a winner.



Those that can, do; those that can't... become games journalists.

MONEY FOR NOTHING

Electronic Arts takes it in before game is even released

Not content with seeing more cash than Gordon Brown's offshore account over in the States, this month EA and ESPN teamed up to hold a special pay-per-view event entitled 'Inside Madden NFL 07.' For the princely some of $19.95 hardcore Madden fans got a sneak peek at just what it took to make the new 2007 edition of the game before anyone else. Your 20 bucks bought you an hour-long walkthrough of the 'new changes and advances in all aspects of the game' and the 'exclusive release of player ratings' as well as tips from top Madden gamers, and behind-the-scenes details about the making of the next-generation *Madden NFL* game.' Sounds like value for money to us. Alternatively, they could've saved their green Washingtons and put them toward the actual game that was released just seven days later.

Those too impatient to wait just seven more days for the actual game can pay money to see a preview before everyone else.

STUNT MEN JOIN THQ

Publisher secures new internal studio

Paradigm has officially joined THQ's stable of internal development studios. Following the acquisition of Kaos a few months back, which THQ promptly set to work on *Frontlines: Fuel Of War*, the publisher has now closed the deal to secure Paradigm's services. Formerly an Atari studio, Paradigm has worked on titles including *Terminator 3: The Redemption* and *Mission Impossible: Operation Surma* across several formats. Its first project under THQ, though, is not a film licence but rather an established game soon to be a film: the action-packed *Stuntman*. Little is known save that it's being developed 'for next-gen systems' and will be released later next year.

Stuntman on PS2: do it exactly right or you'll fail. Miserably. One of the most unforgiving PlayStation 2 games ever.

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Everything you need to know broken into numerical factoids

0 Amount of stores currently taking PS3 pre-orders

1 New game project for Brian Singer

2 PS3 titles canned by FROM Software

4 Years for SNK To Make PS3 games

5 Fifth *Burnout* game in development at Criterion

11 Pounds to port your old game saves to PS3

12 PS3 games using Unreal Engine 3

20 Dollars to get an early look at *Madden NFL 07*

24 Number of Blu-ray movies currently available in the US

25 New members to the Next3 forum - help us make it 125 by next month why don't you?!

100 Number of PS3 games said to be in development

150 Price in pounds you can expect to put down as a PS3 desposit

183 Price in pounds of Sony's new wireless enabled handheld device, the awesome Mylo

2000 Number of *FFXI* game accounts suspended or terminated due to cheating

4745 Price in pounds of Panasonic's new 65 inch HDTV

10,000 PlayStation 3 Development kits shipped

10,000,000 Dollars declared too much for next-gen game budgets

70,000,000 Predicted unit sales of the PS3 over its lifetime

3,000,000,000 Amount in dollars made by the *LOTR* franchise pre *White Council*

32,000,000,000 Profit in Yen made by Sony in Q2

Here's Mr Singer looking in no way at all pretentious. Not at all. Not one bit.

HE'S SUPER, THANKS FOR ASKING

Brian Singer has game project in the works

IT'S LONG been the norm that every big budget movie immediately spews out a (crappy) videogame counterpart but as we move into the new generation of consoles it seems Hollywood directors are bypassing the big screen altogether and telling their stories through games instead. In the last few months we've heard talk of Steven Spielberg, Wes Craven and now *X-Men* and *Superman* director Brian Singer all planning work on videogame projects in the future.

This month the American director told SpikeTV that he's got a game in the works for Atari, which sees you playing as a secret service agent who's charged with protecting the president. Though the S man (that's Singer not Superman) wasn't forthcoming with any in-depth details it has got us intrigued. Will the game be an *In The Line Of Fire* bodyguard-esque affair or a *24*-inspired 'we've only got so long to save the president' kind of deal. Either way if George Bush features we don't fancy his chances. Knowing the geek-pleasing Singer he might even throw in a superhero or two, just for good measure.

Another director-related titbit that emerged from its trailer was that LucasArts has signed a agreement with Day 1 Studios, the developer behind the MechAssault series, to produce a new IP for next-gen consoles. Again no specifics were available – seriously it's like getting words from a laryngitic mute sometimes – LucasArts did enthuse that Day1's proprietary technology 'perfectly complements the engaging story and intriguing characters you'd expect of a LucasArts title.' With this all-new IP and a next-gen *Star Wars* game on the way LucasArts must have a team of Jawas working around the clock to get things finished on time.

THE DIRECT APPROACH

Who we want to see directing PS3 games

GEORGE ROMERO
Resident Evil

FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
Brothers in Arms

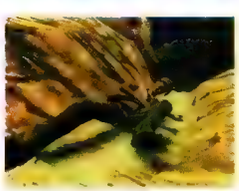
STEVEN SPIELBERG
Turok

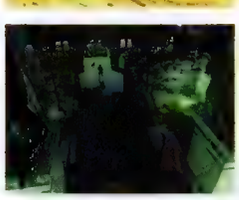
GUY RITCHIE
The Getaway

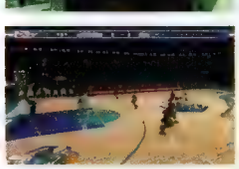
GUILLERMO DEL TORO
Hellboy

KILLER CASH

Are game budgets too big?







With the price of games on the up customers are demanding extra from their games – but with publishers engaged in a constant battle budgets are being pushed through the roof. This might sound like a good thing, but it's causing problems for smaller development outfits. Whilst the financial difficulties facing developers in the next-gen has been well documented many industry insiders have started to suggest that bloated budgets are coming at the cost of efficiency and creativity.

Revolution Software (the developer behind *Broken Sword*) MD Charles Cecil said in a recent interview that "the bigger developers talk about games costing tens of millions of dollars; it seems obvious to me that they don't need to cost that much, unless, as with a big film budgets, you're paying certain key individuals enormous amounts of money... There's something slightly strange going on." Questioning the cost of next-gen development in comparison to titles for the Nintendo DS that are relatively easy to write Cecil believes the games industry is being split between profit and innovation, leaving wallets battered on both sides of the cash register. "If a game costs $10 million to write, the chances of earning a royalty is tiny. If a game costing, at the DS level, several hundred thousand pounds, then it becomes much more viable economically."

Not content to lambast big budgets Cecil closed by questioning the practices of the competition by suggesting that large development teams are doing their projects damage as well. "EA talks about the fact that it's got teams of 150 people working on a project. To me, that can't be efficient, either commercially or creatively." Judging by this kind of fighting talk we should expect the fourth instalment of *Broken Sword* to be developed by a single staffer and be more innovative than the wheel.

6 Things we love

6 things we love about...

Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots

IT'S THE END OF THE TALE FOR THIS SNAKE

1// Death becomes him Yes folks, after 20 years, all the secrets, lies and espionage is to be laid bare, culminating in the death of Solid Snake. You may be shaking your head and screaming "Noooooooo!!!!", but his death will no doubt come with the unveiling of many of the mysteries built up over the years.

2// The cast and crew Numerous characters return to help and hinder Snake, with Naomi Hunter having escaped, Meryl now leader of Foxhound and Revolver Ocelot being taken over by the lunatic arm of Liquid Snake after Ocelot lost his hand in *Metal Gear Solid*.

3// The leading man There's no hint of having to play as anyone else during the game. In fact, the idea that Raiden will be a playable character has been unequivocally denied. Playing through as Snake in his final mission is exactly what we wanted to see.

4// New threads all round Snake's new sneaking suit is a good deal more advanced than anything we've seen in the series so far, giving him the ability to hide pretty much anywhere in the game. It's not just Snake though, as Raiden now has a seriously cyborg ninja suit.

5// New game, new gear The new batch of Metal Gears aren't like the previous lot, being part biological and part mechanical, which gives them a horribly freaky feel, and introducing terror to a series that only ever had tension in the past.

6// No place to hide Much has been made (but, sadly, little seen) of the hugely destructible environments. Try to camouflage yourself in a building, or up against a wall and watch as the Private Military Contractors and Metal Gears tear the world apart around you.

new games

Just announced

LOTR: THE WHITE COUNCIL

THE WHAT// A new RPG based on, or should that be 'inspired by' Peter Jackson's movie trilogy but with an original storyline derived from Tolkien's novels. Hairy hobbit types can choose to play as several different character types including man, elf and dwarf. Each role's destiny is to become a hero allied with the White Council, whose members include beardies like Gandalf.

THE WHO// EA has already achieved a certain degree of success with the *Battle For Middle Earth II* on the Xbox 360 so things look promising. Learning its lesson from the disappointing movie tie-ins the development team now have a perfect vehicle to move the franchise forward.

CARS

THE WHAT// CG movie-ties are becoming as inevitable as death and taxes, so with PIXAR's new movie *Cars* coining it in over the summer in both the theatres and game stores it will get a second bite of the cherry this Christmas when the movie is released on DVD and game on next-gen platforms.

THE WHO// Cartoon connoisseur, THQ is in the driving seat for this teaming up with the PIXAR team that bought us *Toy Story* and the difficult second album that was *A Bug's Life*. So the game should compliment the movie if nothing else.

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM

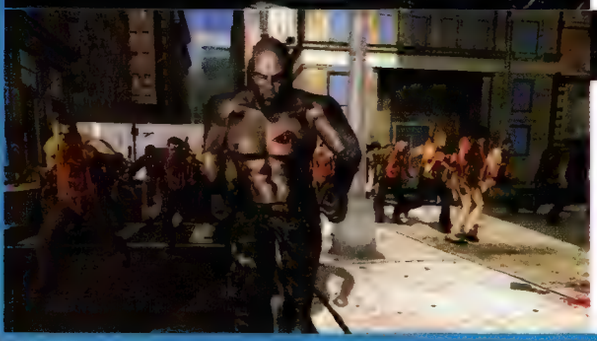
THE WHAT// Return of the Mech! Yep the series that boasts guns, gasoline and bigger bots than Beyoncé signs up to appear on the PS3. Away from the early *Gundam* universe featured in the PSOne and PS2 games, this has a much more realistic setting in which to host the battle between the Federation and Zion, allowing players to join up with either faction.

THE WHO// Namco Bandai is a past master when it comes to Mech games and *Gundam* has a lengthy heritage on the PlayStation but in terms of PS3 development it's an unknown entity. It will certainly have to work hard to broaden the genre's appeal.

GETAWAY

THE WHAT// A tough one – what is *The Getaway* on the PS3 all about? Initial footage seemed to suggest the game would be set in modern day London, but Sony has neither confirmed nor denied any details about the game. The most recent rumour is that the game will be set on the streets of Amsterdam.

THE WHO// Sony London is at the helm once again so we can expect a similar flavour to the original game, plenty of mindless violence and a tirade of language filthier than Jordan's underwear draw. As for a return of the comedy cockneys, it's anyone's guess.



POSSESSION

THE WHAT// An action RTS where you play a zombie looking to exact revenge on humans who experimented on you and made you the twisted creature you are today. As a beast known as 'The Enslaver', you must enlist an undead army and unleash them on the evil research corporation.

THE WHO// With games like *The Little Mermaid*, *Bad Boys II* and *SpongeBob Squarepants* to its name you might not have a great deal of faith in Blitz Games to deliver a genuinely absorbing zombies game. However, from what we've seen so far it does look suitably shocking.

Keeping you bang up-to-date with all the latest game announcements on PlayStation 3

We want it as much as... The precious

THE GOOD// We like the fact it's not based directly on the films because that might limit the places you can go and the pointy-eared freaks you interact with. With no real story specifics confirmed we're just hoping we can level up enough to face Sauron himself... so we can kick him right in 'the ring'.

THE BAD// Not everyone has the time (or the desire) to sit around all day levelling-up and stockpiling items so the RPG formula might have to be twinned with a helping of action if it's going to be the one game to rule them all.

next3 wanted 3/5

We want it as much as... Skid marks

THE GOOD// To be successful the PS3 has got to appeal to more than just a hardcore audience and games like this will certainly help. If the next-gen game follows the same template as the current gen version expect plenty of cutesy story-based racing adventures based on key moments from the movie.

THE BAD// The PS2 was dogged by lazy movie-ties so we hope that the next-generation technology might inspire developers to put a little more effort into their animated adventures. The *Cars* game has received mixed reviews on current-gen formats so we don't expect much.

next3 wanted 2/5

We want it as much as... A tweaked nipple

THE GOOD// Destruction is key to the new game with players able to destroy virtually everything from background scenery to combat vehicles and obviously Mobile Suits. The destructive elements play a strategic part in the game – so by destroying a bridge, you can block paths.

THE BAD// It's a mech game so it has the potential to be very by the numbers, early footage looks fantastic but doesn't it always? Unless gameplay can match the CG footage then it could have limited appeal. However, the development team say the game won't need any CG movies.

next3 wanted 2/5

We want it as much as... Dawn from Eastenders

THE GOOD// A new setting or different settings for that matter might make for a deeper experience as you travel around various prominent cities committing your misdeeds. If the game's visuals match up to any of the tech demos we've seen *The Getaway* should be quite the showstopper.

THE BAD// We do have a few concerns about the franchise: the original game faced big delays and *Black Monday* wasn't all it could've been so what can we expect from the next-gen *Getaway*? We could be playing it endlessly or it could turn out to be a complete flop.

next3 wanted 3/5

We want it as much as... A Hob Nob biscuit

THE GOOD// While zombie games seem to be the flavour of the month, Blitz might have something a little different with this one. The ability to unleash hundreds of flesh-hungry zombies onto a crowd of innocent bystanders is certainly a welcome one.

THE BAD// The lack of a publisher doesn't fill us with confidence and the zombie invasion concept is being explored in games like *Dead Rising*. While *Possession* does look to use some clever RTS elements and original concepts the idea itself isn't unique.

next3 wanted 3/5

Next flashes Just in...

RACING COLOURS

Games say white is alright...

If it's not PSP billboards causing offence it's our illustrious gaming history. One person intent on exposing the darker side of games (sorry, no pun intended) is University Of British Columbia student Robert Parungao who last week published the finding of his honours thesis on racism in games. The results of an eight-month study concluded racism is more than prevalent in videogames, claiming that games aren't subject to the same scrutiny as TV and Film and so have not seen the changes in portrayal of minorities those media have. Parungao claims that games like *GTA*, *Shadow Warrior* and *Warcraft 3* use minorities as 'mainly criminals and obstacles to be disposed of by a white hero.' Perhaps somebody should tell CJ.

The idea that racism is prevalent in videogame doesn't come as a surprise. After all *most* characters in games are criminals.

PS3 IS OUT AND PROUD

10,000 shipped and counting

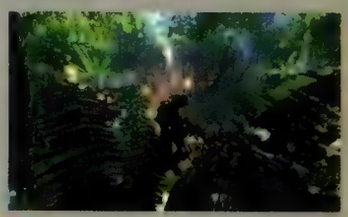
While some are sat at home reading these pages, cake smeared around their face and tears rolling down their cheeks wondering why oh why don't they have a PS3 elsewhere in the world, over 10,000 developers are doing the exact opposite. No not sucking water in through their eyes but cheering and high-fiving until their palms are raw due to the fact they are in their possession the Holy Grail: a PS3 development kit. In a statement made this month SCEA PR manager Ryan Bowling said 'The best and brightest development teams are hard at work creating franchises and original IPs... to date we have shipped more than 10,000 systems to 208 companies in 11 countries, the largest number ever for a PlayStation platform.' While this doesn't mean a slew of games will be available at launch it does mean developers can start getting friendly with the technology.

newsflashes Just in...

CRY ME A RIVER

Crysis headed to PS3?

We're sure you've seen the headline plenty of times before and each time it was probably followed by a denial from the FarCry studio that it has no plans to release a console version of its stunning *Crysis* game. But if not *Crysis* then what? A job listing has appeared on German developer Crytek's official website for a programmer for the PlayStation 3. Though there is no mention of *Crysis* in the job description it does state that applicants will be responsible for developing a next-generation framework based on CryEngine 2.0 and the need for creating solutions for PS3 porting. This has got to be biggest indication yet that Crytek and EA are planning to bring the stunning shooter to PS3. It's so beautiful, it makes us, erm cry.

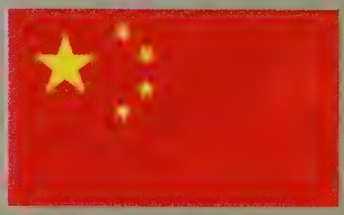


It really is a crime to make a next-generation title and omit a rainforest scene. Got to love those next-gen fronds.

CHINA IN OUR HANDS

Chinese gamers get first and perhaps last look at PS3

While the majority of the world got a good look at Sony's new born at E3 and will get reacquainted at TGS, Chinese gamers got their first peek at the PS3 at China Joy in Shanghai. On display at China's largest videogame expo, the PS3 was the star of the show with gamers mobbing Sony's stand just to get a glimpse of the machine. Though no playable games were available the reason behind their enthusiasm might have something to do with the fact that the PS3 might never be released there because of Chinese law that restricts the sales of certain videogames and consoles which have been developed overseas. Sony Asia is trying to resolve the problem but at present has not confirmed if it plans to release the PS3 there.



We're not going to comment on China's political situation, but we're worried that this PS3 thing will affect Next3's sales there.

THE EVOLUTION OF FOOTBALL

Pro Evo to hit PS3

Not *Pro Evo* on PS3 but rather *Pro Evo* on Xbox 360.

With the Xbox 360 version of *Pro Evo* fast approaching and due for an early playtest at Leipzig, it seems that football fever hasn't subsided as much as you might have expected, given England's exit from the World Cup. Whilst the first next-gen *PES* title is to be on the 360, us PS3 folk will be getting something that much more interesting, being built from the ground up as you read this. We're not sure what that means; we hear it with such regularity nowadays it's ceased to denote anything significant. These screens are from the 360 version, but should give you an idea of the look of the piece when it comes out. Not hugely impressive, but then that's never been what *Pro Evo*'s about has it? How can Konami improve on the series? What kinds of new gameplay elements can we expect from master Shingo 'Seabass' Takasuka? We're hoping for much more than a simple reworking of the visuals, but there are huge dangers in rendering down and rebuilding such a popular title. Whilst we applaud Konami for actively looking to change something that's very much at the top of its game, and we've been going on at them for years to have a real go at the series, you have to be a little apprehensive about what's promised to be such a grand overhaul.

THE CHANGING FACE OF E3

The games industry's biggest trade show is downsized

BEST OF E3

We look back over the years and recount some of the show's best moments...

1 UNVEILING OF THE PS3
It was like witnessing the delivery of our firstborn

2 WOLFMOTHER PLAY THE VIVENDI PARTY
The booths were loud - these guys were louder

3 PARIS HILTON LAUNCHES THE WRONG GAME
The girl can't even get the name of her own game right - we really do despair

4 NINTENDO'S GEORGE HARRISON'S REVEALS THE FUTURE OF MARIO
'You'll never see Mario shooting hookers' - but you will see his fat face in every single game Nintendo release

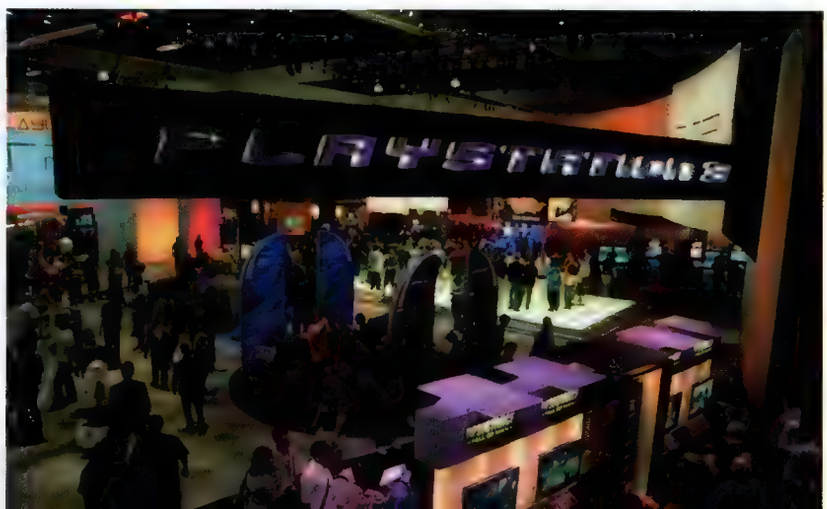
5 FIRST SHOWING OF THE EYETOY
Sony plays the party game and come up trumps

6 ENTER THE KILLZONE
Sony show off its '*Halo* beater' though it didn't quite beat *Halo* it did give it a quick flick to the balls

E3: you take one hot and sweaty LA Convention Centre cram it full of games, industry outfits from the top boys to the small fries, Then add a million flashing lights, booming speakers and 60,000 attendees.

E3 is where it all happens, the one time in the year when you have every publisher and developer under one roof all making big announcement's and unveiling secret projects, giving interviews and offering first hands-on play tests of all the latest games. And let's not forget the publisher parties, booth babes and more swag than a pirate's attic. However all that is about to change as The Entertainment Software Association has announced sweeping reforms.

Unhappy with the lack of media coverage their products were getting in relation to the large amounts of cash they were investing into the show, publishers believe that the budgets would be better used on smaller, specific shows where they can invite who they believe to be the key media players and where their games get more attention. Speaking to the Wall Street Journal, ESA main man Doug Lowenstein said that E3 would now be called 'E3 Media Festival'. Instead of endless droves of fans and press squeezed tight into one building the event will now cater to an intimate 5,000 attendees. Held in July rather than the traditional month of May in order to



Next3's Keith Hennessey is a closet *SmackDown* diehard, though we've just pushed him out of his closet.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Current generation footy

It'll be a while until the PS3 version hits, so what new mechanics can you expect from this generation of *Pro Evo*? The Japanese version, *Winning Eleven 10*, was hugely enjoyable, but much too arcadey an experience for our western tastes. The over-the-top, end-to-end stuff has been toned down, at least at the preview stage anyway. New weather conditions and quick free kicks as well as vastly improved reaction times and player animations have already won over many folks in our office already.

give developers more time to polish products slated for release at Christmas and moving away from the Convention Centre the Media Festival will now occupy suites and conferences rooms at two Los Angeles hotels to ensure a more personal approach. When asked for feedback about the new look E3, an EA spokesperson said 'The industry has gotten to a place where it can afford to have more intimate or more private meetings in different types of settings.'

Many big name publishers have come out in support of a scaled down show with more time focusing on pivotal games. In a statement posted on the E3 website the ESA president went on to say that ' Over the years, it has become clear that we need a more intimate program, including higher quality, more personal dialogue with the worldwide media, developers, retailers and other key industry's audiences.'

However, before all the backslapping and high fives begin perhaps we should ask what will become of the smaller companies whose pockets aren't as deep as the others? They'll have to try even harder to make their voices heard and get their products out there. In a time when next-gen technology is causing development costs to skyrocket and the moneymen are taking less risks, it might be a good time for the major players, but it's certainly not a good time for the little guy.

SMACKDOWN IS OUT FOR THE COUNT ON PS3

Next-gen grappler delayed until next Christmas

IT might not have been a title at the top of everyone's PS3 must-have list, but to the small following of games-playing wrestling fans *WWE SmackDown Vs RAW 2007* was kind of a big deal. One of the first games ever to harness the *WWE*'s thrills and spills *SmackDown* first appeared on the PSOne and continued to evolve on the PS2. While plenty of changes were evident between the franchise's annual updates the transition from PS2 to PS3 is to be the biggest yet.

While *SmackDown* fans have been eager for the latest news, shots and info on the next-gen title, over the past few months the developer-publisher tag-team of Yukes and THQ has been snapping at the heartstrings of PlayStation fanboys everywhere. First up it delivered a 'stunner' with the news that the franchise was no longer a PS exclusive but was going multiplatform. The news hit us like a hard chop to the heart, but we were willing to be the bigger man and share our toys – but worse news was to follow as this month a post on the German THQ forum indicated that the PS3 version of *SmackDown* had been cancelled.

Obviously distressed by the disappearance of Mr McMahon and Co. from the release-list, computer keyboards were set alight by forum members looking for some sort of explanation, at which point THQ's own Max Stellar jumped into the thread and addressed the issue: "The back drop for this is that the PlayStation version was always going to be finished substantially later than the other versions." Stellar continued: "The development team would rather concentrate its resources on the other three platforms." Charming. You couldn't make this stuff up – go read it for yourself, oh, wait just a minute you can't because shortly afterwards the entire thread was removed and no further mention came of it until a few days later when THQ's European offices released an official statement that read. "Consistent with our goal of delivering the highest quality content across all next-gen platforms, we have decided to postpone the debut of the *SmackDown* series on PlayStation 3 until the holiday 2007 timeframe."

So not only will Xbox 360 owners get to play next-gen *SmackDown* but they will be the first ones to do so, with PS3 owners having to wait until Christmas 2007 to climb into the ring. Trying hard to find a silver lining the statement does allude to the fact the after the release of the other versions the development team will be able to dedicate it's attention to the PS3 game

ALL-TIME WRESTLING UPSETS

News that rocked the wrestling world more than this...

VINCE 'SCREWS' BRET

In Bret's last match-up before exiting to rival organization WCW, Vince McMahon makes a monkey out of the Hitman by tricking him into 'dropping' the title belt in front of his home crowd.

HOGAN TURNS HELL

Hogan might well 'know best' but he also knows how to shock American wrestling fans. After being the industry darling for many a decade shortly after his departure from WWE he joined WCW and turned from wrestling babyface to the biggest heel in the game.

WWE BEATS WCW

Just when it looked as though an underdog organization might just do the impossible and defeat the money-hungry monster that was WWE - Vince managed to turn it around and put his financial finisher on the opposition.

the hot list

TEN OF THE HAPPIEST GOINGS ON IN THE WORLD OF PS3

A LIST OF PURE JOY FOR YOU TO PERUSE

newsflashes Just in...

CASINO ROYALE TO BE SKIPPED

Activision gambling on its first Bond title

We were all expecting Activision, once they'd snagged the rights to the *Bond* licence, to be throwing out sub-par titles like sweeties at Halloween. We're glad to report however, that rather than releasing a glut of licensed titles with the glib carelessness of a Big Issue vendor, they're taking their time with their first *Bond* game, and skipping the potentially lucrative opportunity offered by the upcoming *Casino Royale*. Instead, the publishing giants are targeting the subsquent film - the 22nd in the series - as a start point for their franchise, the first of which is set to be developed by Treyarch. Well done Activision, it's rare to see such restraint with licensed titles, lets hope it's a good one when it turns up.

BIG BROTHER SHUTTING DOWN SERVERS

EA to ditch old online titles

EA, the source of a majority of licensed sports and racing titles around, has signalled its intention to begin ditching many of the servers for its older titles. Included in the October 1st shutdown are *Madden NFL 2005* and *NFL Street 2*, with a larger batch of titles including *FIFA 2005*, *Fight Night Round 2*, *Need For Speed Underground* and *Tiger Woods 2005* in August.

Also recently noted was the passing on of information from Microsoft to EA when you sign up to play EA games through Xbox's Live service. Indeed some of the information transferred includes bank details, home address, phone numbers and all manner of online info such as click paths and game stats.

***Need For Speed Underground* is one of the titles that you'll only be able to play offline from October**

01 PS3 IN PRODUCTION

Hooray! The PS3 has officially entered production. Finally the console is being made. Over 1000 dev kits have been shipped around the world for developers to get working on, and those troublesome controllers have similarly been put in the palms of development teams, meaning that a November launch looks unshakable. The games are also being tested, and with many studios having Blu-ray burners, our first PS3 code shouldn't be too far off.

02 OBLIVION COMING TO PS3

It's still very much in the realm of rumour, but there's no reason for Bethesda's mammoth RPG not to come to out on the PS3. With online pre-order listings on American retail giants GameStop's website adding fuel to the fire, you can pretty much bank on a conversion to Sony's console at some point in the near future.

03 100 GAMES IN DEVELOPMENT

With over 100 titles in development for the PS3, and new ones being announced every week, the future's very bright for us. With games like *Assassin's Creed*, *Golden Axe*, *Grand Theft Auto 4*, *Resistance: Fall Of Man* and *Metal Gear Solid* to look forward, amongst a barrage of other titles, anyone lucky enough to get their hands on a PlayStation 3 will have plenty to keep them entertained.

04 E3 IS DEAD, LONG LIVE E3

With the demise of the old E3, and all the industry back-patting and lazy journalism that went with it, the videogaming world should be a brighter place. The new E3 promises that us real journalists will be able to see the games in a much more positive environment without every man and his dog with a tenuously linked website getting in our way. Result.

05 F.E.A.R. EFFECT

For those who've already played through *F.E.A.R.* on the PC, this may not be an astounding bit of news, but for the console lovers, the announcement that the first-person thriller is coming to the PS3 will be something of a joy.

07 HAVE YOUR SAY

The Next3 forum is finally up and running. Having built it from scratch from old toilet paper and duck tape, we're quite proud of our little baby, and would urge you lot to get your collective asses in gear and start writing. Easy to find at www.next3.co.uk, and full of the kind of wit, intellectualism and comedy you find crammed in between the pages of our mag every month, why shouldn't you have your say.

08 ENTERTAINMENT FESTIVAL

This year's Edinburgh Interactive Entertainment Festival is going to be packed with the kind of highbrow dissection of the industry so rarely available to us gamers. With numerous awards up for grabs, and the opportunity to hear and question some of the industry's most knowledgeable bigwigs as well as play some upcoming videogames, the EIEF is one of the biggest gaming events in Europe.

06 MEMORY TRANSFER

Somewhat overlooked, but an aspect of next-gen gaming that would affect many people, the ability to transfer your existing PS2 saves onto your PS3 is a real bonus. Using a cheap adapter, the save transfer, much like the 100% backwards compatibility, underlines Sony's commitment to making the most complete console ever.

09 NICE BABYLONS

In a pre-announcement announcement, J Michael Straczynski has hinted at the development of a *Babylon 5* MMO title. Everyone loves *Babylon 5*, so the opportunity to burn around with other likeminded fans in the *Babylon 5* universe is a truly mouthwatering prospect. We'll have more next month, but you can bet your bottom credit this'll be a popular one.

10 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

It's not just the recent announcement of a brand new *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* game – with nothing to do with the previous glut of sub-par titles, thank God – that's got us going, oh no. The simultaneous proclamation of a new, and darker *Turtles* movie is one that has really excited us. Cowabunga dude!

RUMOUR CONTROL

Grinding your rumours to make our bread...

1 The PS3 will fingerprint your code, meaning that once you buy a game it'll be useless on anyone else's PS3. This handily does away with any second hand selling/theft/piracy.

RATING 0/5

■ What a very silly idea. Although these rumours were floating around in response to Sony's vehement hatred of all things to do with piracy, the reality is that it would seriously hurt Sony's chances of winning a console war.

2 Anyone can develop titles for the PS3 – absolutely anyone. Not only does this cut down on development costs, but it'll load up the PS3 with imaginative IPs and brand new ideas.

RATING 4/5

■ This rumour is probably as long standing as the PlayStation brand itself, and is more to do with the Game Yarouze Digital Meister project which encourages independent developers and lone coders to propose titles for Sony.

3 The 20Gb version of the PS3 is not scheduled for release on our shores. Sony's reasoning for this is that the market simply isn't demanding enough to warrant shipping two types of the console over here.

RATING 2/5

■ Again, this is a case of overactive teens on overactive forums creating lies based on truth. Whilst Sony has said that the two versions of the PS3 will be on sale, it doesn't look likely that they'll be on sale at the same time, with the 60Gb pack being tipped for a lead in the UK.

4 The PS3 isn't compatible with any current HDMI televisions, meaning that we'll have to wait until HDMI integrated TV's are affordable enough to produce. Also bundled into this rumour is the possibility that Sony won't be shipping cables with the package.

RATING 3/5

■ We're a little concerned about this one, as whilst many modern TVs won't be able to take the optimum output, future electronics will no doubt include it, based on the popularity of HDMI. So we're a bit concerned that we're going to have to fork out another £40 for decent HDMI cabling.

5 EA signs exclusive deal with Sony, meaning that there will be no online content from the publishing giant for those pretty 360 owners for the next five years. Mwah ha haaa!

RATING 1/5

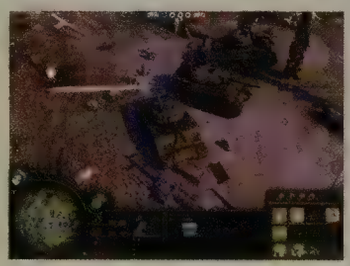
■ Yet more spurious rubbish. Whilst it's true that EA did have difficulty with its own servers clashing with Microsoft's, EA isn't the kind of company to cut itself out of any market.

newsflashes Just in...

WE COULD BE HEROES

PS3 to get Company Of Heroes?

We're very happy in our jobs – let that be known – but by keeping our beady eyes on the game industry's 'positions vacant' board you can learn a lot about upcoming software titles in the making. This month our virtual curtain twitching uncovered a posting by THQ for a tools programmer for its Vancouver-based studio, Relic Entertainment. What's interesting is that the job description includes details about an upcoming game, which is described as a new strategy title for next-gen consoles. Aside from *The Outfit*, which was released on Xbox 360 earlier in the year, the only other game Relic has been working on is PC RTS, *Company Of Heroes*. So does this mean that we'll be getting some 'company' on the PS3 courtesy of a port or is Relic pondering how to blow things up in a whole new way?



BLAZING ANGELS SETS ITS SIGHTS ON PLAYSTATION 3

Ubisoft's fly boy title confirmed for launch

PC and 360 World War II-based aerial fighter *Blazing Angels: Squadrons Of WWII* is set to appear as a PS3 launch title. It's already been confirmed as a launch title on the Wii, but the French developer has promised plenty of extra content for PS3 players such as new missions and a 16-person multi-player mode. The game will most likely utilise the pad's tilt function, à la *WarHawk*, making aerial combat more immersive than previous versions of the game. Despite its lukewarm reception on PC and 360, the extra missions and tilt pad functionality could make *Squadrons Of WWII* a PS3 top gun come launch.

Never before has so much been owed by so many to so few. *Blazing Angels* won't be as good as Winston Churchill, however.

But we thought that videogames only ever taught children to become murders and criminals.

STUDENTS CRAVE VIDEOGAME EDUCATION

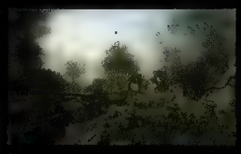
Kids would rather 'play' history than learn it

IT GOES without saying that if given the choice children would rather play games than sit in a classroom and listen to the monotonous drone of a know-it-all teacher, but according to a recent Ipos MORI survey (carried out as part of the Teaching With Games project) kids would rather have games replace teachers altogether.

2,300 students from England and Wales took part in the survey, and results showed that at least three in five of 11 to 16 year olds would prefer tutelage via DualShock controller than traditional educational methods. Younger students proved the most receptive, with 66 per cent of 11 year olds opting for videogame education, while 49 per cent of 16 year olds said that lessons would prove much more interesting with the inclusion of interactive games. We'll be the first to say you can't argue with them apples – what better way to learn about *WWII* than firing up *Call Of Duty 3* and taking the fight straight to frontlines? PE would be a bit a bit difficult, mind.

GAME TO LEARN

Five of the best gaming alternatives to lessons



1 CALL OF DUTY 3
Forget boring history lessons, learn about the liberation of Paris and those who took part, by picking up a pad and kicking Nazi arse.

2 HALF LIFE 2
Science was only ever entertaining when it was practical. *Half-Life 2* features tons of physics-based puzzles, making textbooks redundant.

3 VIRTUA FIGHTER 5
People bugging you? Stealing your lunch money? Calling you fugly? Kick bully arse Pai-style with this wonderful self-defence simulator.

4 AFRIKA
One of the most snoresome lessons of all. Any geography nuts out there can now explore the land of Timon and Pumba without leaving their chair.

5 SINGSTAR
For the budding musician. Unless a *Guitar Hero* game finds its way onto PS3 *SingStar* is a great alternative to music lessons.

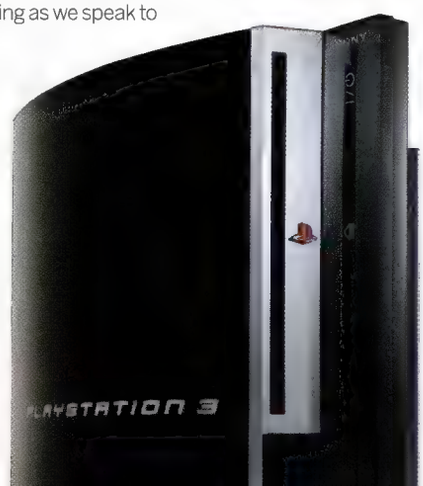
PS3 PRODUCTION STALLED

2 million units still promised for launch

DESPITE all manner of promises coming from Sony central about launch day PS3 shipments in a recent interview, SCEA president Kaz Hirai stated that retail shortages in almost every territory are inevitable. One of the main reasons for this might just be that even now (less than three months before the console is set to hit shelves) PS3 production lines still haven't started rolling. Speaking to industry insider Gamespot, Hirai said, "We haven't started manufacturing yet. Some of our ops guys were actually just in China, and also in Japan reviewing lines and everything else. But they are preparing as we speak to get manufacturing going."

Needless to say we were a little concerned, but it was to get worse before it got better as Hirai was quizzed about retail allocations – leading to an admission that some consumers are likely to be disappointed come 17 November. "I think it's going to be very much of a challenge to be able to meet every single unit demand that's out there in the market. That's just a logistical impossibility." Given the monumental fudge show that was the Xbox 360 launch and all the confusion surrounding PS3's pre-order system, such sentiments aren't too comforting for those already horrified at the thought of being left empty handed.

Quick to realise that such scaremongering might not be the most positive course of action, the Japanese electronics giant announced its plans to have at least 2 million units available by launch day. A spokesperson speaking on behalf of Sony commented, "Unfortunately Kaz Hirai's comments in the recent Gamespot interview regarding PlayStation 3 production were misunderstood. We are still on schedule to ship 2 million units for our mid-November 2006 launch and an additional 2 million by the end of the year for a total of 4 million units." While these reassurances are very encouraging, there's still no word on whether or not production of the console has begun. If not, even with its years of manufacturing experience Sony will certainly have a mountain to climb in order to meet its lofty targets.



The PS2's online service was neither ergonomic or particularly sexy, but it got us all online for free.

ACHIEVING THE IMPOSSIBLE

Sony's rewards system entitles you to more

AN ELECTRONIC Gaming Monthly podcast has managed to get information (or so they say) on the name of PlayStation 3's rewards service. While Sony has, rather predictably, refused to confirm or deny this snippet of gossip, the Internet is rife with derisory forum posts, mostly complaining about the similarity of the names. While it has to be said that if this rumour in fact turns out to be true, Microsoft has a fair case for pointing and chanting 'copycat!' in true playground fashion, it's worth remembering that Sony has always been reasonably descriptive with its naming of its products and services. Entitlements, the supposed name of the service, unlike Achievements, indicates a different kind of reward system, one that involves some kind of online currency perhaps.

The point here is not whether Sony has outright copied Microsoft's revolutionary concept, but how much it will add to the system – something that seems to have bypassed almost every one of the aforementioned forum posts. Will there be a physical reward, cash bonuses maybe? One-off prizes? Certainly the name hints at the idea of accruing points to spend on rewards, but frustratingly, we're not going to find out the facts for some time.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? PS3 online speculation

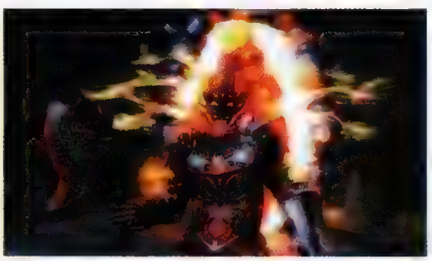
The specifics of Sony's online service are yet to be revealed, but there's been enough speculation about the name to warrant a little insert. Known at various points on Internet forums as HUB, Home, PlayStation Life and PlayStation Network, Sony's online service is a pretty closely guarded secret. We reckon the best of these is HUB: it's catchy, punchy and, if you ask us, sassy. Whatever it decides to call it we're sure it'll draw on the experience of the PS2's popular but shoddy online function as well as Microsoft's Live service.

LIVING IN OBLIVION

Bethesda's behemoth to hit PS3?

The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion, regarded one of the most complete games in history, has rejuvenated the RPG genre making it hugely popular on both 360 and PC. We're not going to miss out on the fun though, as US videogame retail giant, GameStop is listing a PS3 version, available on 6 November. A country mile from any real confirmation, it does seem a little silly to be offering the game for pre-order at $59.99 – not just at GameSpot, but also rival vendor EBGames – if there hasn't been a nod from a reliable source.

More surprising are rumours of the title going to PSP on 15 March 2007. While there was talk of a port to PS3 and PSP, even before this year's E3, nothing has materialised despite a supposedly leaked release list from Bethesda months ago. The only comment from Bethesda has come in the form of a straightforward note from Pete Hines saying that the rumours are "just an assumption" and that there are "no announced plans for any other version right now". It makes little sense for Bethesda not to release the mammoth RPG on Sony's console however, so the question for us is when rather than if.



JUST AWARDS

Just how good is Oblivion?

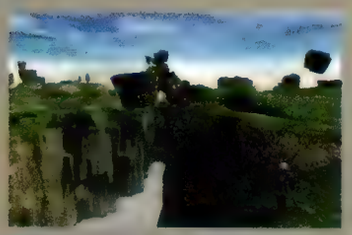
As well as winning a Best Role-Playing Game accolade at the 2005 Game Critics Awards, *Oblivion* has been nominated for a slew of gaming decorations including a Virgin Music Award for Best Videogame Score, and numerous Golden Joystick recommendations. Other nominations include G4's G-Phoria 2006, Best RPG And Game Of The Year.

newsflashes Just in...

FINAL FAN BAN

FFXI cheaters get their just desserts

They've tried it before, and to little avail, but *Final Fantasy XI* server moderators have issued the most effective of warnings by suspending or terminating over 2,000 accounts linked to what they brazenly call 'cheaters'. These unsavoury types inhabiting the world of the *Final Fantasy* MMORPG were hauled over the coals due to the use of 'third-party tools', whatever those are. The guys in charge, as well as showing their intent to clamp down on cheating also had this warning to anyone considering exploiting holes in code: "We will continue to take strict actions against those individuals that we have confirmed to have used such tools."



The beautiful world of *Final Fantasy XI* is no place for cheaters.

SURPRISE SURPRISE

The disc is dead, long live the hard drive

Sony's Phil Harrison, after discussion about the disc format war with Microsoft, made a bold statement in relation to the PS4 should such a thing ever come about. Saying he'd be surprised if the PS4 had a physical disc drive, Harrison is clearly driving hard to get Sony's e-Distribution initiative off the ground as early as possible to get a foot into what he clearly sees as the future of gaming. According to other industry pundits, like *Wired* magazine's David Kushner, "Ultrawideband web connections have the potential to eliminate the need for discs entirely," with flexible, downloadable titles like Sony's *SingStar* altering the way games are perceived.

PlayStation 3 *SingStar* enables you to download hi-def music videos that are also compatible with the game.

next media
the BIG screen

High-definition gaming at its best

DAWN OF THE HIGH-DEF DEAD

RESIDENT EVIL 5

OUT: TBA

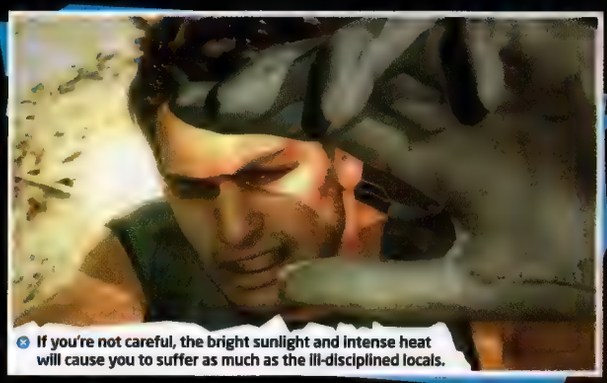
ABOUT// Shaping up to be the definitive game in the series, *Resi 5* picks up where number four left us, with the new third-person over-the-shoulder perspective in full flow it aims to offer a similar mixed bag of action, puzzles and pant papping that made the forth game such a monster.

Produced by series veteran Jun Takeuchi, the game is said to have the theme of escape at its core – but escape from what we're not entirely sure. Capcom has yet to confirm whether *Resi 5* will feature zombies proper or 'infected' humans, but what we do know is that the evil beings will attack at a frenetic pace.

Environments will play a bigger role here than in previous games, with Capcom using the PlayStation 3's visual trickery to create varied locales and stunning vistas. The colour palette has undergone substantial changes, with the dreary browns of *Resi 4* being replaced by the bright vibrancy of the Middle East – in fact the heat of the new setting will also have implications regarding gameplay. Heat exhaustion, dehydration and the recharge qualities of a shaded safe haven will all play their part in surviving this *Resident Evil* episode.

As you can clearly see, the visuals will be the icing on this already tasty cake and if the team can deliver the goods the game should run at a smooth 60 frames per second: that's twice as fast as *Resident Evil 4* on the GameCube, which will help make character movement all the more realistic. Some might say it's been a long time in the making and faces a lot of competition in terms of horror games but the *Resident Evil* franchise has long set the standard for console survival horrors and from what we've seen of *Resident Evil 5* it looks primed and ready to carry on that tradition well into the next-generation.

The level of detail with the main character is stunning, with each hair individually rendered.



If you're not careful, the bright sunlight and intense heat will cause you to suffer as much as the ill-disciplined locals.

TOP SECRET

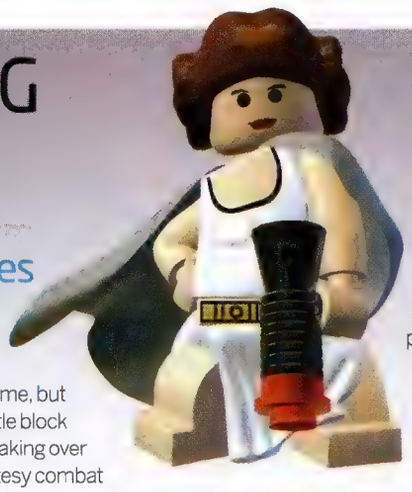
Glut of hush-hush IPs coming to PS3

IT'S NOT just Sony being secretive about its PS3 plans, it seems that the practice of keeping every ounce of information under wraps is something pervading the entire industry at the moment. Usually forthcoming PRs now have their mouths zipped tighter than a nun's chastity belt. This makes assembling the news that much more difficult for us newshounds, but it gives us an enormous sense of worth when we do uncover something brand new.

So, this news? Three entirely new IPs are set to hit Sony's new console next year. Typical. You wait ages for one, then three come along at once. The one we've got most info on has been given the working title 'Big' by Sony developer Naughty Dog. Apparently set in the jungles of the Caribbean, this third-person adventure, despite starring a distinctly generic protagonist looks to be a reasonably exciting run-and-gun adventure with hints of Croft-esque acrobatics and antiquity collecting. With a good deal less information, Midway's Surreal Software, the guys responsible for Midway's *The Suffering* are to produce "New, exciting IP, on a new technology base, with a concept which will blow you away," if its advert for a new team member is to be believed. The last of this trio of IPs is a collaboration of publisher Vivendi and developer Spark Unlimited most famous for its involvement in *Call of Duty: Finest Hour*. Given Spark's previous endeavours, we're expecting a high-octane FPS with plenty of next-gen features. Hopefully, if we can loosen a few tongues, we'll have more on these titles next month.

TRAVELLING WITHOUT MOVIE-ING

Traveller's Tales goes beyond the galaxy far, far away



We've been anticipating it for some time, but the truth about the future of those little block men is out and it looks like they'll be taking over the world with their unique mix of cutesy combat and puzzling. In a recent interview with PC Zone, development director at Traveller's Tales Jonathan Smith talks about the further adventures of the block-heads. No concrete plans have been announced, but there was a distinct intention to take the franchise beyond the *Star Wars* universe. Given George Lucas' involvement with the previous Lego exploits, it'd be a fairly safe bet that a diminutive Indiana Jones will feature somewhere along the line. We expect a few Hollywood blockbusters to get the Lego treatment.

BRICKING IT

What we're expecting from the little Lego men

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN Simulating Captain Jack Sparrow's unique gait might be a little difficult to replicate with Lego, but dress up a little blockhead with a three-pointed hat, silly facial hair and a cutlass and you have a recipe for success.

BATMAN How brilliant would this be, and if you've seen Lego's Batman range of toys you'll be aware of how sinister yet cutesy those Lego men can be.

HARRY POTTER Expect this franchise, should it occur, to be similar in nature to the *Star Wars* series. Lots of Force-style powers and wand work. Oh, and dragons. There'll be some dragons.

I'D BUY THAT FOR A DOLLAR...

Games we'd love to see Lego-fied

Robocop
Imagine just how cute a Lego ED 209 would be. There'd be buckets of baddie blasting, and that bit at the beginning of the film where Peter Weller gets his hand blown off could be perfectly recreated.

Dawn Of The Dead
Hoards of little Lego zombies to chop down with hundreds of weapons. Survival-horror at its very best. Traveller's Tales should definitely look into this one.

Battle Royale
Take control of a bunch of Japanese school kids and take on the world in the online deathmatch to end all online deathmatches. As long as they don't recreate the second one, this franchise could run and run.

newsflashes Just in...

CORE VALUES

Armored Core on your PS2

While no one's made it clear in plain English yet, From Software's website has recently been updated with news of a new Armored Core title. If ropey Japanese translations are to be believed we'll be looking at some of the speediest, most intense mech battling ever created. A release on these shores is far from guaranteed however, but here's hoping. On a similar note, there are a good few rumours floating around at the moment that a 360 version of the latest mech buster has been canned, but until we get some word from From Software, we'll have to put this one down as speculation.

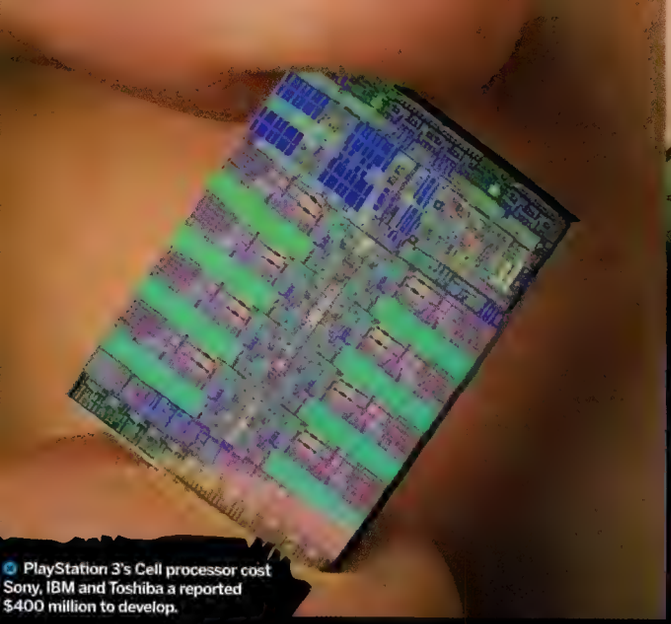
Mah jong and mech-based battling - two staples of Japanese gaming and the Japanese PS3 launch no doubt.

STRING QUINTET

Guitar Hero 5 on its way?

We're eagerly awaiting the follow up to RedOctane's *Guitar Hero*, so the news that there should be "five or six" *Guitar Hero* games available to wannabe rockers by mid-2007, is somewhat exciting. Activision, which recently bought developer RedOctane for $100 million, hasn't announced anything of that magnitude, but the news - coming from RedOctane CEO Kelly Sumner - is perfectly feasible, given the relative ease with which titles in the franchise can be put together. The option to download your favourite tracks is also a strong possibility from publishers who've recently made $1 million in *Call Of Duty 2* downloads.

Guitar Hero on PS3 is something we'd welcome with open arms. Hugs!



PlayStation 3's Cell processor cost Sony, IBM and Toshiba a reported $400 million to develop.

ON THE UP

There, there, it's not all that bad

Sony has recently reported a 30 per cent revenue drop in its console division - something that will only continue to dip as the PS3 nears its November launch date - but it has managed to accrue Q2 profits of over ¥32 billion (approximately £150 million) as a company as whole. Giving further cause for celebration, the PS3 has managed to eclipse the Wii in terms of interest, if CNET's weekly hit list is to be believed. Jumping from ninth to sixth, the PS3 leapfrogged Nintendo's not only in consumer interest on the popular technology news service but also in predicted sales. Current estimates for the Wii are around the 40 million units mark, with the PS3 soaring at 70 million over the course of its lifetime, so don't worry, Sony, we're sure you'll not go hungry.

SONY SUCKS IT UP

Scary financial plans for PS3

NOT ONLY are Sony's launch day plans frighteningly in the red, but also the losses are planned to continue well into the follow up period for the Computer Entertainment division, according to Sony's senior VP. "We might see valuation losses of a size that we cannot laugh away in the quarter", commented Takao Yuhara having made his feelings felt on what he sees as the under-pricing of the PS3. Very much reliant on what many see as a risky pricing strategy, the PS3's influence on the company's overall performance is thought by many analysts to be far greater than ever before as losses made with the chips used in the console could effect the entire group's financial stability.

Betting much of the bank on the Blu-ray storage medium at the same time, the success of PlayStation 3 is very much pivotal to Sony's future plans. With the Cell processor – one of the most expensive components – set to feature in a number of other Sony products, Yuhara is predictably positive that all costs will be recouped come the end of the PS3's first five years, leaving the electronics giant ahead in both the console and the storage wars.

I seems things are beginning to get a little edgy in the Sony camp, with the wider implications of the PS3's future success or failure becoming evident. Yuhara's barely veiled scepticism of the PS3's pricing is something guaranteed to get the nay saying vultures circling overhead, but ultimately there's little doubt in our mind that Sony is more than capable of riding out this particular rough patch.

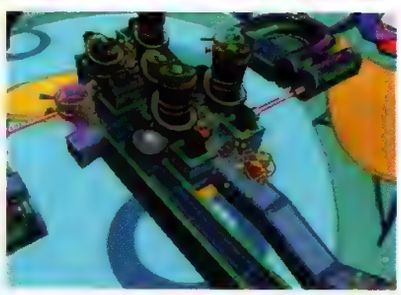
WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH...

...indys make low-end games

IT'S A difficult time for developers what with the hugely increased development costs of working on PS3, there's no doubt about that, but the ultimate result seems to be the possibility of lower end games from independent developers. In a recent interview with GamesIndustry.biz, Ron Moravek of the once-independent Relic Entertainment explained the difficulties of indy development, saying, "You look at today's games, where they're costing between $10 and $20 million, and maybe the big games – the *Halo 3*s and the next *GTA* are probably going to be $25 million – it's like, how would you do that as an independent? It's so, so difficult".

Of course, with these kinds of budgets, development teams for in-house blockbuster titles often run into the tens of thousands, but independent often have to work with double figure teams. What kind of future can we expect of smaller studios then? Sensibly, according to Moravek, indy's should be looking at smaller budget, low-end titles, electronic distribution and episodic content. This is no bad thing as smaller developers, being unrestricted by publishers, should provide plenty of new IPs for the next gen, and we're always in favour of that.

Compared to *Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Mercury Meltdown* is a low budget title. But is it as good? Hmm?



Games like *Metal Gear Solid 4* soak up almost as much cash as the biggest blockbuster films and employ a team of hundreds.

newsflashes Just in...

MYSTERY MAN

Activision loses rights to Iron Man

Marvel, over the last few years, has forged what seems to be a profitable partnership with the videogame iterations of some of the comic book world's most exciting properties: *X-Men*, *Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four*. They may have been beneficial to each other, but with a few notable exceptions, the offerings have been pretty dire. Good news for *Iron Man* fans then, as Activision has announced that it "no longer retains [*Iron Man*] rights". Who the licence has been passed on to remains a mystery, with EA, Midway and TakeTwo all refusing to comment on rumours of a move to their respective publishing houses.

Poorly made and poorly received titles like *X3*, are the bane of comic book gaming fans' lives. Sort it out, Activision.

SHIN DIGS

Shin Unozawa speaks on the future of gaming

Waxing lyrical about the future of gaming at a press event hosted by Japan's Computer Entertainment Software Association, industry bigwigs such as Bandai Namco Games vice president Shin Unozawa and SquareEnix boss Yoichi Wada hinted at patching being the way forward with online gaming. Avoiding using the word patch directly, the pair cited a reduction of costs and more thorough testing - by the gaming community - as being the main benefits of a piecemeal method of distribution. And concerning the PS3? Well, the Bandai chief seemed in no doubt that "The PlayStation 3 will definitely sell".

Yoichi Wada: vocal about the future of gaming coming in loads of little itty-bitty bits.

RISKY BUSINESS?

Developers clash over PS3

WITH the next-gen party set to start at the end of the year, game developers are making preparations to ensure they have an invite, but as with all parties a dilemma is thrown up – who should you side with? Is it the alternative artist, the Nintendo Wii, the sensible-shoed Xbox 360 or the party animal PS3. Of course, if it were up to us we'd be part of the PS3 crew every time, but recently there's been a lot of indecision from the development world about who will be developing games for Sony's new console.

This month both Atari and SNK have said they'll hold off on any PS3 projects for the next few years. Speaking to Gamesindustry.biz, Atari CEO Bruno Bonnell confirmed that the publisher had no plans to release any PS3 games before 2007, but eventually it does plan to support all three new consoles "fairly equally". "It's just that we're lacking information about the PS3 at this stage, because we have basically a rough release date and a high retail price point," said Bonnell. "As far as the Wii and Xbox 360 go, we'll be there for this season – for PS3, we'll probably have to wait."

While at first Bonnell's comments might seem a tad discouraging he did go on to assert that he has every faith in Sony's strategy. "I think that by deciding to put the PS3 at this price Sony is choosing to differentiate itself from the other consoles. The fact that you have Blu-ray and the fact that it's HD compatible – it's all driving me to think that Sony is picking up the high-end of the market but there will be a time they can reduce the price and access more people."

So while we might not be getting any Atari games at launch, the potential for future projects is certainly evident. What is not so positive however are sentiments express by SNK Playmore executive Yoshihito Koyama who suggests the developer may wait as long as four years to begin work on PS3 games. "My first impression is that it's expensive. The PS2 is good enough. It's small and cheap. For us, for manufactures, we have to invest in a new system, and the PlayStation 3 is a risk." Not discounting PS3 development altogether it will most likely be later rather than sooner for PS3 players to get their hands on the likes of *Metal Slug* and *King Of Fighters*. We know that money is the root of all evil and it seems that the green stuff is the main factor behind SNK's no-show: "There won't be enough consoles at launch. Few consoles mean few software sales. We need to wait three or four years. Maybe 2009-2010 is a good time to release a game for the PS3."

Atari and SNK might be weary now but we've a feeling they'll change their minds come 17 November.

Both EA and Epic are strong supporters of the PS3 and they will be rewarded in videogames heaven.

Forget Double Dragon, Army Of Two is what the next-gen co-op experience is all about.

ARMY OF TWO DEPLOYED

Two's company, three's not allowed

WHEN you're thinking about raising an army with which to smite your enemies and crush all those who oppose you (as we often do) you would probably imagine it consisting of more than just two recruits. But if EA is to believed that's all that's needed to triumph over adversity and *Army Of Two* is here to prove it. As the game's title suggests two-player co-operative gameplay is the order of the day as you team up with an AI or human partner, enter a war zone and fight to save the earth from political turmoil.

The entire game is made up of two-man co-operative missions, so you and your partner will have to mastermind a range of tactical manoeuvres to get one over on the enemy. We recommend you choose your partner wisely as if they lack the mad skills required you could end up looking like a complete tool.

As if the sound of picking a partner and double-teaming some opponents online doesn't sound enticing enough this month EA has sent us a selection of screens to get you excited at the power of two.

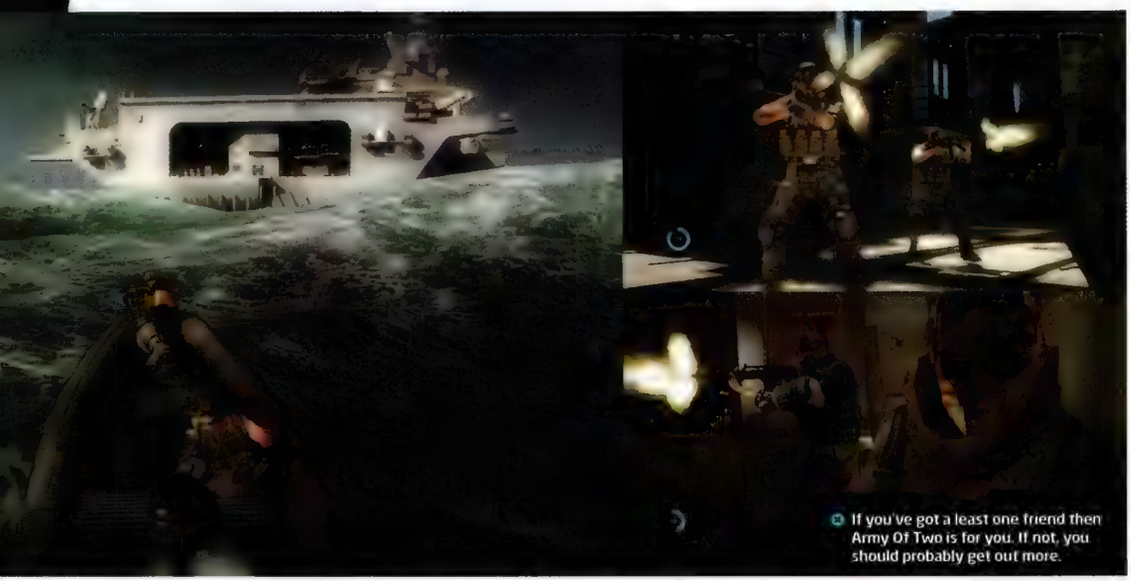
Whatever the format you can always rely on EA Sports for support.

Developers clash over PS3...

WITH the financial difficulties facing Atari and SNK's limited catalogue, perhaps we shouldn't be expecting developers to pull out the big guns straight away. But just this month some of the larger publishing houses have pledged their support to next-gen platforms. We can't mention large publishers without talking about EA, and the giant has been vocal on the subject of PS3. Expecting to have four to five games at launch including *Madden NFL 07* and *Tiger Woods*, EA was keen to stress that it's further down the line that gamers will see what the PS3 (and EA) can do. "This Christmas, it's going to be difficult to harness the full power of the PS3 on the first generation software titles... there's a lot of horsepower inside the PS3 that we'll be able to unlock over years two, three and four."

Again it's a similar story with the Xbox 360, which is still yet to see any true triple-A games, but, unlike Microsoft's new machine, even before release the PS3 has over 100 games already in development. Speaking to The Guardian, Sony's worldwide studios president Phil Harrison commented. "We have shown more playable games than ever before, so the signs are good and right now there are more than 100 Blu-ray movies available in the US. More than 100 games are in development and all the major third-party publishers have pledged their strategic support for the platform." Obviously the proof of the pudding will come from developers who are now able to experiment with both the console and the new controller. "Developers now have final hardware in their hands, though there will be some upgrades to the operating system – there's nothing unusual about that," explained Harrison. "The new controller is in developers' hands, so all the pieces of the puzzle are there."

While we're not sure where Sony is getting its Blu-ray figures from (we can count around 30 on sale in the US) only once the shipping of Blu-ray burners to development teams begins (so they can test games running in their finished format) will we be able see if they echo Harrison's sentiments. Whilst the figure of 100 titles currently in development is exciting, we can look forward to the best of what the rest has to offer. Despite rumours of porting problems surfacing on a daily basis, publisher Activision claims to be 'very encouraged' with its progress in porting 360 gamers to PS3. We're not sure how loosely the word 'encouraging' is being used, whether its 'encouraged' things are going well or 'encouraged' things will get better. Nevertheless with industry's big kahona's showing Sony's system plenty of love we're very 'encouraged' indeed.



If you've got a least one friend then Army Of Two is for you. If not, you should probably get out more.

PS3 TO ACCEPT PS2 SAVE GAMES

Don't let all your your hard work go to waste

When Microsoft first launched the Xbox 360 it was lambasted for two major problems, the first was its half-arsed approach to backwards compatibility and the other was the fact that there was no way of porting old game saves to the new system. Seizing on this oversight Sony intends to use its whole arse and deliver a backwards compatibility solution that's second to none.

We already know that Sony is aiming to make every original PlayStation and PS2 game compatible straight out of the box but, according to a recent FAQ posted on the official website, Sony is going that extra mile and enabling the PS3 to support old game saves as well. "To use saved data on a PlayStation 2 memory card, you must copy the data onto a virtual memory card within the hard disc," the site reads. "This requires a PSOne/PS2 memory card adaptor to copy the data to your PlayStation 3." We assume the data will be transferred via USB or a Memory Stick slot but what is not clear is whether Sony will be making these devices itself or farming production out to third-party manufacturers. Either way it's good to know we won't have to lash out *Guitar Hero's* Bark At The Moon on hard setting all over again.

Lucky we can transfer our old Guitar Hero saves to save what's still left of our stubby fingers.

If you've spent an age levelling up characters on various RPGs they can live again on the PS3.

We don't think there's too many people out there who fancy playing through DMC 3 again.

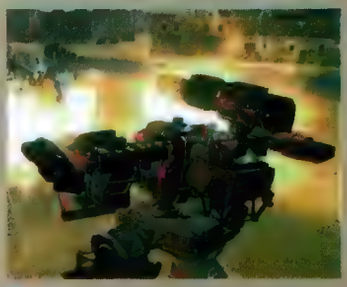
newsflashes

Just in...

TRASH TALKING

Two games disappear 'From' PS3 release list

According to reports in the latest issue of Japanese gaming publication *Famitsu*, two more PS3 games have been canned – it must be getting quite full in there at the moment. The two doomed titles were both being developed by From Software, *Dark RPG* and *Black Blade* have been given their marching orders without ever seeing the light of day. While no real amount of information about the games was available, they were revealed at last year's TGS as potential PS3 titles. Whether either game will be pulled 'From' the trash by other publishers is yet to be confirmed.



Unless you're some kind of big robot nut, then the disappearence of *Black Blade* won't come as too much of a disappointment.

HOORAY FOR BLU-RAY

Gamers will go crazy for Blu-ray

We, more than most, are excited about the prospect of stacking those teeny-weeny Blu-ray boxes next to our PlayStation 3s. But it seems we're not as excited as the poor fool who appears on the Blu-ray official website. The gormless test subject who features in its marketing video has clearing been subjected to so much ruthless PS3 game action that he has gone completely loco. Pictured here, you can see he is so discombobulated by the six-foot high PS3 he has taken to wearing odd socks, a crash helmet and an expression only ever reserved for a heavy squeezing session on the can. We might be laughing now, but expect thousands of us to look just as catatonic come 17 November.

PlayStation 3 is somewhat bigger than its predecessor but not this big.

ALONE WITH EVERYBODY

Atari keeps release date in the dark

WHILE THE PS3 won't be short of a horror-fest or two, we were kind of hoping to scare ourselves stupid when Sony's dream machine arrived at the end of the year. So much so, in fact, that we've already been down to Wilko and bought ourselves a bumper pack of underpants in preparation. However, one pair of tighty whiteys will have to go into storage due to the delay of Atari's *Alone In The Dark*. We say delay, the game never did receive an official release date but it was expected to arrive toward the end of the year but now the game's publisher, Atari, has revealed it won't be with us until the company's 2008 fiscal year. Before you go bleating out expletives and tearing the magazine in two allow us to explain that the 2008 fiscal year actually runs between April 2007 and March 2008.

Wanting to justify any potential delays to the game, Atari boss Bruno Bonnell asserted that, "We are announcing effectively *Alone In The Dark* as one of our franchises for the future." He then went on to confirm that Atari has very big things planned for the series. "We are actually extending *Alone In The Dark* to some other formats right now that we have not even announced yet." The game is currently in development for both PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, but whether the game is another victim of the rumoured PS3 development difficulties has not been confirmed. Admittedly disappointed by the fact we won't get to play *Alone The In Dark* any time soon, we'll just have to scare ourselves by hiding spiders in each others shoes.

NEEDS TRUST

Public distrust Xbox but apathetic about PlayStation

A RECENT psychological study, conducted at Anderson Analytics, has found that brand advertising could have a significant effect on young adult's attitudes and perceptions. According to the market research firm, the test looked at how young people responded to different consumer brands including Xbox and PlayStation. Brand strength is perhaps one of the most important weapons when it comes to deciding which next-gen console is for you, so it was interesting to see that the results revealed test subjects exposed to Xbox-brand images were more likely to be 'higher on power motivation' and self confidence than those who viewed the PlayStation images. We can't say that the big green X really does it for us but, hey, whatever lights your candle. The good news is that Sony clawed its way back when subjects viewed images of the console and related advertising material. People in the Xbox group had much higher levels of brand distrust than those in the PlayStation group. So we've learnt that Xbox evokes confidence and Sony is trustworthy, but what the study fails to tell us is which will win the next-gen war – how about we forget all these studies and just hold pistols at dawn.

BACK SEAT DRIV3R

[redacted] man comes clean

While Atari bigwig Bonnell was busy talking up the company's impending releases, the publisher's sales and marketing VP, Nique Fajors, has been slamming former IP *Driver*. Just weeks after the franchise was sold to Ubisoft in a deal worth 19 million Euros, Fajors described *Driv3r* as, "A half-baked product that was pushed out the door for revenue reasons." Thanks for that, Nique, we just wish you had told us that before we shelled out over our 40 notes for it. Let's hope Atari will make a mends on PS3 as Fajors went on to state that the publisher intends to focus more on quality in the future by hiring staff who feel "Disgust with losing and disgust with being mediocre." He also mentioned plans to create a new Atari Online community by re-releasing titles from its back catalogue via services like Xbox Live, so hopefully we'll be seeing some 'full-baked' classics on PS3's network system.

newsgrid

GOOD, BAD, EXPECTED, UNEXPECTED – LET'S PUT THE NEWS IN CONTEXT!

MAPPING OUT THE MONTH'S NEWS ON GRAPH PAPER. BECAUSE WE CAN

GOOD

BAD

UNEXPECTED

EXPECTED

PS4 WITHOUT DISC DRIVE

Sony is all about the future. Downloadable content is already proving popular with gamers, so the next logical step is downloadable games. Phil Harrison is on the case.

E3 GOES BYE-BYE!

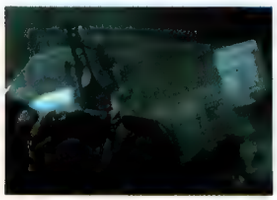
We're already missing the booth babes and free swag, but E3's demise was inevitable. Smaller shows in the future ensure journalists get a lot more work done instead of standing around, shouting over the masses.

PS3 SAVES BACKLASH

Sony gives us the chance to use our PSOne and PS2 saves with our PS3 and what happens? People start bitching over having to buy a peripheral that is hardly going to be expensive. Any excuse, eh?

IN-GAME ADVERTISING

It was always going to happen. With development cost rising, more funding has to come from outside sources, and in-game advertising is a logical endeavour. Let's hope developers don't overdo it.



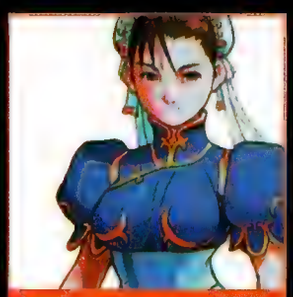
DELAYED IN THE DARK

Atari is suffering hard times at the moment and *Alone in the Dark* is its ace in the hole. It's been delayed and will also most likely be milked to death on other formats.

CLINTON WANTS TAX ON GAMES

Hilary really doesn't like us having fun does she? Now she wants to impose tax on videogames. It really wouldn't surprise us if her and Jack Thompson got hitched before the next election.

Versus! Who's the best housewife?

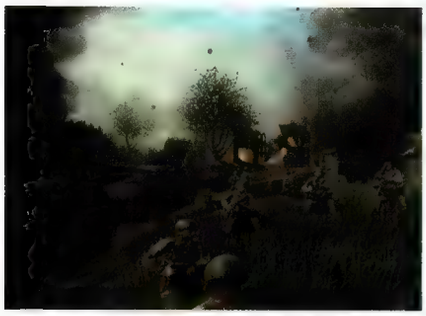


CHUN-LI

	Chun-Li		Paris Hilton
Cooking	7	2	**Cooking**
The high kicking sex bomb must be pretty nifty in the kitchen – you don't get that beefy on Findus Crispy Pancakes			Given her performance on *The Simple Life*, anything more complex than toast will end in a loss of life
The kids	3	4	**The kids**
Being something of a career woman, Chun-Li isn't likely to be much crop with a baby in tow. She's not exactly got child-bearing hips has she?			Unless children come in fashionable taffeta bags that slip over the shoulder she's bound to lose them somewhere on the strip
Sexy in a pinny	10	8	**Sexy in a pinny**
Er… we know she's a videogame character, but we can't get this particular image out of our minds. Time to order some Hentai			Well there's no doubt that the millionaire heiress has a hot bod, and pinnys are amongst the sexiest of functional garb
Weekly shop	8	6	**Weekly shop**
She has to be pretty handy at getting to those hard-to-reach tins of beans, as well as carrying the shopping back to the car.			Ouch, there's unlikely to be any frugality with Paris's shopping choices. Let's face it, she's not going to be spending much time in the
In the bedroom	10	7	**In the bedroom**
Anyone who remembers the shower scene from the animated movie will be well aware of just how sexy Chunners can be			We've all seen it so don't pretend. At least you know what you're getting with a girl that's been on the net
OVERALL	38	27	**OVERALL**

PARIS HILTON

ALL THE LATEST NEW SHOTS AND INFORMATION ON THE GAMES THAT REALLY MATTER



CALL OF DUTY 3

New images reveal the prettiest Nazis ever

NEW SCREENS

ABOUT// *Call Of Duty 3* will have tanks, guns and we're most definitely sure there will be explosions. And, er, some World War II stuff. Did we mention explosions? Sorry but there hasn't been much info lately regarding *Call Of Duty 3* – not beyond the obvious stuff (like the fact it's next-gen and based on true events). Thankfully, Activision has released a number of new screenshots, hinting at some of the key things that will befall players when the game is released at launch.

The most obvious revelation is that you'll again be fighting alongside NPCs – an idea *Call Of Duty 2* introduced by rarely leaving the player alone. Tanks factor into the action again – and given the previous games it's obvious you'll drive one. Some of the images depict open battlefields appearing to continue *COD2*'s non-linearity (where you could tackle many maps as you saw fit).

The game looks gorgeous and these new screenshots clearly state that. Nazis have never been so pretty and the rain-drenched fields look amazing – with moonlight reflections bouncing off muddy waters – and the facial animation has clearly been given a kick (the battle action moments, where you find yourself struggling up close with an enemy, will be extremely intense affairs thanks to power of PS3).

Unfortunately it does have a sense of been-there-done-that, because there's only so many places you can take a game set during World War II. But apart from that little nadir, these images perfectly accentuate what is an already great-looking WWII FPS.

METAL GEAR MORSELS

Kojima drops new hints about MGS4

ABOUT// While we've been trawling the Internet, bugging Konami's phone lines and sleeping at the foot of Hideo Kojima's tiny, tiny bed in an effort to get more information on *Metal Gear Solid 4* it seems the place we should've been is San Diego at the annual comic convention. It was here that Kojima addressed a sea of men in sweaty black t-shirts and thinning ponytails to talk about his upcoming PS3 title.

According to a message board post, the *Metal Gear* man revealed that *MGS4* will be fully playable at next year's E3 'Entertainment Festival' (so much for our hopes of a quick run through at TGS) and that the development team is aiming to output the game in 1080p. Kojima said that this was only made possible by the extra storage capacity of Blu-ray. Knowing Kojima's love for movie-length cut-scenes he'll be making use of every spare inch of disc space.

The session closed with Kojima being quizzed about the role of the motion-sensor controller in the new *Metal Gear* game and though nothing was confirmed he did admit the team had been trying out a few ideas including using it to snap enemy's necks like a Christmas goose. At least it won't be used to steer old-man Snake's wheelchair.

FANTASY FUTURE?

NEW INFO

Square Enix addresses industry concerns

ABOUT// Square Enix president Yoichi Wada spoke recently to NBOnline about the future of games – and possibly *Final Fantasy*. Wada believes the industry has moved from focusing on platforms to the games themselves: "One no longer need rely on a certain game machine with a certain business model" (a hint that Square Enix may release more games on other platforms?).

Copyright was also addressed. IPs can now be manipulated by anyone and Wada wants balance and fairness when it comes to content copyright: "... the general feeling is that it's okay to broadcast online games live. However, people are starting to reconsider the practice of using game graphics to make movies and posting them on YouTube." He continues: "The problem is that these judgements should not be based on the prevailing sentiment, but on rules". Which is understandable, after all we don't want videos of Cloud declaring PS3 sucks, do we?

RESERVED EVIL

[redacted]nt Evil 5 only on PS3 in Japan?

ABOUT// Despite Famitsu recently listing it as the third most wanted game in Japan (behind *Final Fantasy XIII* and – at the top – *FFIII*), there are rumours emerging that *Resident Evil 5* might not see cross-platform release in Japan. As we're sure you're aware the Xbox 360 hasn't really been selling like sake, so it makes sense for Capcom to avoid the, ahem, lesser console.

But what really started the rumour mill turning was the lack of recent updates to Japanese website ECGeo.com, which prides itself on up-to-date news and information via email. The game has only been listed as a definite PS3 release. Obviously this doesn't speak for the rest of the world, although, as we're sure you'll remember, *Resident Evil* did begin life on PlayStation.

NEW INFO

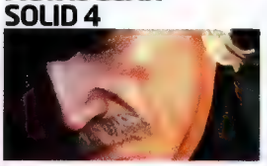
PLAYSTATION next3 team most wanted

WHO'S WAITING FOR WHAT...

NICK JONES

There's nothing quite like a Hideo Kojima-produced trailer to get someone excited about a PS3 *MGS* game. And that someone is me. The fact that it's the final Solid Snake game should be enough to get you excited too. And for the people who don't care about that? Just look at it!

MOST WANTED
METAL GEAR SOLID 4



KEITH HENNESSEY

Why does setting something in Vegas instantly make it ten times better? I'm not entirely sure, but the fact is it does. Disappointed with previous *Rainbow* games like *Black Arrow*, this looks certain to put the boys back on top. Guns, gambling and Mai Tais – this has got to be winner.

MOST WANTED
RAINBOW SIX VEGAS

TOM LECLERC

Being right in the middle of a gigantic in-depth *Assassin's Creed* preview, I'm just getting more and more excited about the prospect of getting our hands on this little beauty. Anyone wanting to know what makes a truly next-gen title should find out when this rolls round.

MOST WANTED
ASSASSIN'S CREED

JAMES DAVIES

I'm damp for *Unreal Tournament 2007*. PS3's superior hardware will give this already gorgeous game a facial and boob job. Also, shooting people up might just quench my insatiable bloodlust and prevent me from stalking around the office with a supersoaker loaded with piss.

MOST WANTED
UNREAL 2007

CRAIG GILMORE

I'm an avid horror fan, and beyond *The Darkness* I'm actually even more excited about Clive Barker's *Jericho*. Nobody writes pain like Barker, and his prose, usually fascinated with the more pleasurable, almost erotic side of violence should translate beautifully to games.

MOST WANTED
JERICHO

RYAN KING

Virtua Fighter 5 because Akira is cheap and I can't wait to kick his stupid head in and put Pai's fist in his mouth. I hated him in every Virtua Fighter he's ever been in and I'll probably hate him in this too. And I'm going to learn Eileen, she's way hot. I'm going to put her fist in Akira's mouth too.

MOST WANTED
VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

Hearing that Bono is being slated by Venezuela was one of the funniest news stories with heard in a while.

BONO IS LORD OF WAR

U2 can upset Venezuela

ASIDE from the predictable news that Activision is set to publish the sequel to *Mercenaries* on next-gen formats, we thought we'd keep you updated with the ever-escalating outrage of the people of Venezuela. Last moth we reported how the Venezuelan government had accused *Mercenaries'* developer Pandemic of trying to incite war by using Venezuela as the setting for its new game, but this month they have turned their attentions to a rather more prominent target, the lead singer of U2.

Bono's investment firm, Elevation Partners owns a stake in Pandemic/Bioware Studios – so a group known as the Venezuela Solidarity Network is holding him responsible for the game. Not known for his warmongering, in a statement released this month the VSN reported that "U2's Bono, well-recognized for his campaigns to reduce poverty and treating AIDS in Africa is backing a videogame that promotes the invasion and destruction of Venezuela." When the VSN tried to contact Bono, he remained silent. "Bono has failed to respond to the concerns of the Venezuela Solidarity Network about his funding of the project."

With Bono choosing to remain mute it fell to Pandemic to reaffirm that "*Mercenaries 2* is a fictional work of entertainment" and "Venezuela was only chosen as a setting of the game because it is a fascinating country full of wonderful architecture, geography and culture." Despite the lavish praise the VSN remains at odds with Pandemic: "It's another piece of anti Venezuelan propaganda that serves only the US military, pure and simple." No matter what reassurances the development studio gives it looks as though the VSN is stuck in a moment it can't get out of, as the dispute drags on.

"Bono has failed to respond to the concerns of the Venezuela Solidarity Network"

LEVEL HEADED

U2 meets Mercenaries 2...

LEVEL 1: SUNDAY BLOODY SUNDAY

Mission Brief – Sneak into a small Venezuelan community and infiltrate a churn group, which is actually just a cover for a big time drug trafficking ring. Order an air strike on their abandoned church hideout and paint the town red.

LEVEL 2: BULLET THE BLUE SKY

Mission Brief – Your target is trying escape in a stolen military chopper and your only means of taking him out is jumping into a gun emplacement and scorching the sky with bullets.

LEVEL 3: HOLD ME, THRILL ME, KISS ME, KILL ME

Mission Briefing – You must seduce the wife of a big money man and convince her to open an all important safe. Once you have obtained a file of secret documents you turn your guns on her and hubby.

LEVEL 4: DON'T TAKE THE GUNS TO TOWN

Mission Briefing – Hijack a convoy of arms trucks leaving a Venezuelan town and use all the firepower at your disposal to create a safe passage to the shore, where you must rendezvous with your mysterious benefactor.

LEVEL 5: HOW TO DISMANTLE AN ATOMIC BOMB

Mission Brief – Work out how to dismantle an atomic bomb, then put it together and blow Venezuela off the map... oh and then split all the money you've earned with tramp-wannabe Bob Geldof.

flashes Just in...

TRAUMA CENTRE

Losing Your Bottle

You may well have heard recent reports about the first ever clinic for videogames addiction which opened in Holland a few months back, well now some patient confessions have started to seep out and are make alarming reading. One gamer's story told of how he barely left his room in over five years due to his obsession. "My room was a mess... Curtains drawn, pizza boxes, empty bottles and junk food wrappers everywhere." Okay, nothing seems amiss there, in fact it's sounding more like our flat all the time, but wait there's more, "I didn't even get up to use the bathroom but peed in a bottle while I kept playing." Owweee, that's not right. Let's hope we're not making similar confessions come 17 November.

Some gaming-addict's activities have gotten a wee bit out of hand. Ouch, that was really very poor.

AD FOR BUSINESS

Codies cash-in

Advertising in games is fast becoming an industry hot potato with marketing groups eyeing up videogames as the next great media platform to conquer. The move into the next-generation looks set to make in-game advertising a given, evidenced by a slew of big publishers announcing deals with advertising agencies. The latest publisher to put pen to paper is Codemasters who has announced a deal with IGA Worldwide to include adverts within a range of next-gen games. Confirmed titles, which will support audio, video and billboard advertising, include the next-gen version of racing franchise *Colin McRae Rally* and a further unannounced property. So come 2007 as well as racing for pride and bragging rights we may well be competing for the McDonald's Cup or the Thomas Cook Trophy.

Next-generation advertising, far from being an unwelcome distraction, could enhance the realism of titles like *Colin McRae*. Look how optimistic we are!

NEW MMO FOR PS3

We could be heroes just for one day

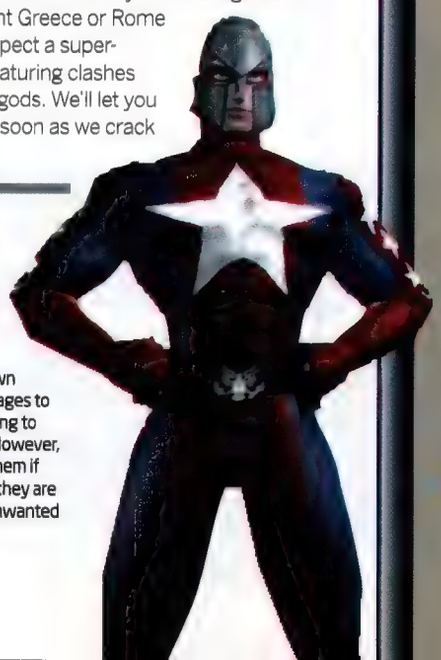
WITH our passport to the world of online gaming in the post there's no doubt that there will be a fairly healthy amount of Massively Multi-player Online games heading to the PS3. So if we're to join the ranks of the beard-stroking crusties it's reassuring to know we should have some decent games to lose our lives in. One game in contention will be a new offering from *City Of Heroes* developer Cryptic Studios who this month announced its plans for a new MMO project set for the PC and next-gen consoles.

It's still unknown whether the game ties-in with the *City Of Heroes/ Villains* franchise or will be a completely new IP, the Cryptic Studios site currently lists 17 open positions including lead designer, programmer and producer. While no details have been confirmed, one of the roles calls for 'an interest in history and mythology'. Though the studio has denied any of its new games will be set in Ancient Greece or Rome perhaps we can expect a super-hero-style game featuring clashes between powerful gods. We'll let you know more just as soon as we crack Cryptic's code.

GIRL POWER

It pays to be pretty

While we're on the subject of MMOs, an interesting report surfaced recently touching on why male players pick female avatars as their character of choice. As you can imagine it all boils down to the fact that there are a lot of advantages to being a pretty girl - people are more willing to help you out or give you items for free. However, as any pretty girl will tell you (we'd ask them if we were allowed anywhere near them) they are also some disadvantages, namely the unwanted attentions of creepy shut-ins.



newsflashes Just in...

TAXING WORK

Clinton Proposes Video Game Tax

According to the Denver-based Rocky Mountain News, Senator Hilary Clinton is getting ready to advocate a new tax for videogames, much like the one added to cigarettes and alcohol. Plus in a devastating anti-gaming one-two punch she is also encouraging concerned parents who feel passionately about violent videogames to come out and speak at conferences. A potential candidate for the 2008 presidential election this isn't the first time Bill's other-half has taken a swing at the industry and if she finds it to be a vote winner we're sure it won't be the last. We're just concerned that if such a bill is pushed through in the States it might well be eyed-up by our money-hungry government and adopted here. Great, first we have to give up smoking and drinking, and now maybe games too - why must they deny us the things we love?

The idea of a videogame tax strikes us with a certain amount of fear, but perhaps publishers can bear the brunt of the cost.

THE DEFINITION DIFFERENCE

High-def visuals to make emotional impact

In a recent interview *Lumines* creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi asserted that he believes the arrival of high-def visuals could have an impact on games comparable to that of the first 3D graphics. Talking at the Develop Conference held in Brighton, Mizuguchi said, "I can't predict the future, but the one thing I can say is the resolution games use will deliver very high emotional impact." We can certainly agree with him on that one. Mizuguchi also had a few things to say about the state of physical media, saying "maybe in ten years kids will be mocking their dads for having gone to shops to buy games at all."

That's just great, we'll add that to our long list alongside our mullet haircuts and flaired trousers.

Mizuguchi sees the dawn of high-definition as being far from a superfluous visual enhancement. This kind of positivity is a joy to hear.

Helping you plan your gaming future

next3 releases

Find out when all the big PlayStation 3 games are coming to a store n

2 sense

Summing up games to the power of two

Call Of Duty 3
Big Gun

Tekken 6
Fight Club

Full Auto 2: Battlelines
Road Rage

Heavenly Sword
God Sent

The Club
Gang Bang

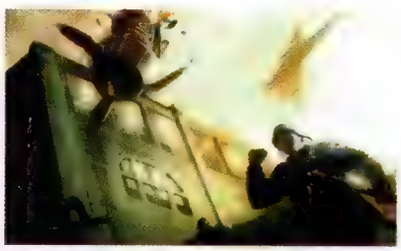
Fight Night Round 3
Fighting Fit

Stranglehold
Woo Factor

WarHawk
Air Necessities

Casino Royale
Royale Rumble

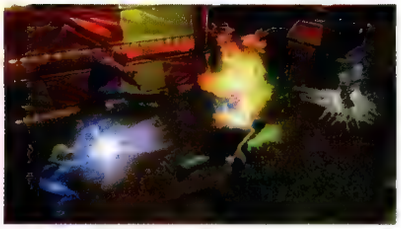
The Darkness
Black Magic



November	
BladeStorm: The Hundred Years' War	Koei
Blazing Angels	Ubisoft
Call Of Duty 3	Activision
Everybody's Golf	Sony
Fatal Inertia	Koei
FIFA 07	EA
Fight Night Round 3	EA
Formula One 2006	Sony
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	Sega
Madden NFL 07	EA
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	Activision
NBA Live 07	EA
Rainbow Six Vegas	Ubisoft
Resistance: Fall Of Man	Sony
Ridge Racer 7	Sony
SingStar	Sony
Sonic The Hedgehog	Sega
Splinter Cell: Double Agent	Ubisoft
Tony Hawk's Project 8	Activision
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	EA
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	Ubisoft
WarHawk	Sony

December	
Genji 2	Sony
Heavenly Sword	Sony
MotorStorm	Sony
Rayman Raving Rabbits	Ubisoft

Q1 2007	
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	Ubisoft
The Darkness	2K Games
Medal Of Honor: Airborne	EA



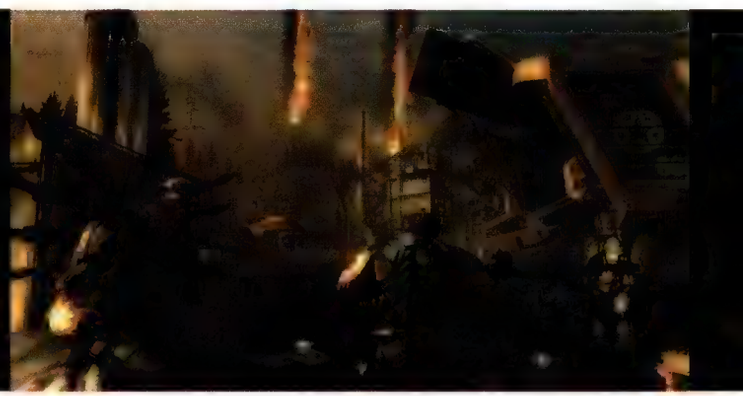
TBA 2007	
Afrika	Sony
Alone In The Dark: Near Death Investigation	Atari
Armored Core 4	From Software
Army Of Two	EA
Assassin's Creed	Ubisoft
Casino Royale	EA
The Club	Sega
Coded Arms Assault	Konami
Codename: Avalon	Climax
Colin McRae: DIRT	Codemasters
Devil May Cry 4	Capcom
Dirty Harry	The Collective
Dynasty Warriors	Koei
Eight Days	Sony

Bring It Out On PlayStation 3!

Although there are plenty of games on the release list to choose from there's always room for one more. With an envious eye on the competition, here's one we'd like to see on our side of the fence sooner rather than later

Quake Wars: Enemy Territory (PC)

A PC exclusive at present *Enemy Territory* is tipped to make its way over to next-gen consoles next year and as far as we're concerned it won't find a better home than PS3. Set on Earth shortly before the events in Id Software's *Quake II*, the game allows players to take charge of the invading Strogg or the Earth Defence Force. With two very different playing styles, terrains and vehicles to choose from, developer Slash Damage looks to be trying something very ambitious with the multi-player modes, which bodes well for Sony's online service. We want it all and we want it now.



Key game Liable to slip Could be dodgy

es

ar you

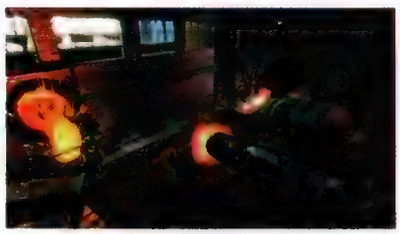
Brother In Arms: Hell's Highway

THE BIG HITTER

Bang, bang you're dead 50 bullets in your head! Matt Baker, Joe Hartsock and the rest of the 101st Airborne Division attempt to open the infamous 'Hell's Highway' and end the war, but end up wading into hell on earth.

Elveon	10tacle Studios
Eyedentify	Sony
The Eye Of Judgement	Sony
F.E.A.R.	Vivendi
Fifth Phantom Saga	Sega
Final Fantasy XIII	SquareEnix
Final Fantasy XIII Verses	SquareEnix
Frontlines: Fuel Of War	THQ
Getaway	Sony
Golden Axe	Sega
Grand Theft Auto IV	Rockstar Games
Gran Turismo 5	Sony
Gundam	Namco
Haze	Ubisoft
Hellboy	Konami
Indiana Jones	LucasArts
Interstellar Marines	Zero Point Software
Killing Day	Ubisoft

Lair	Factor 5
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	Pandemic
Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots	Konami
Monster Hunter 3	Capcom
Monster Kingdom	Sony
Monster Madness	SouthPeak
Need For Speed: Carbon	EA
Ni-Oh	Koei
The Outsider	Frontier
Parabellum	Acony Games
Project Offset	Offset Software
Resident Evil 5	Capcom
Romance Of The Three Kingdoms	Koei
Sega Rally Revo	Sega
Spider-Man 3	Activision
Stuntman 2	THQ
Tekken 6	Sony
Turok	Buena Vista Games
Unreal Tournament 2007	Midway
Virtua Fighter 5	Sega
Virtua Tennis 3	Sega
The Wheelman	Midway
World Snooker Championship 2007	Sega



next3 Essentials

Plan ahead for PS3's essential...

First-Person Shooters

1 Unreal Tournament 2007

The one we've all been waiting for – it's simply unreal

2 Killzone

When it finally arrives this will be a 'killer' app

3 Resistance: Fall Of Man

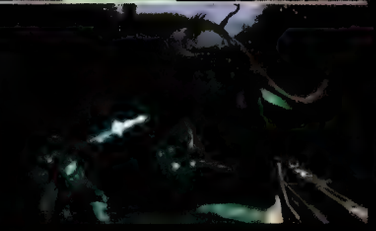
We can't resist it and neither will you. Trust us...

4 Coded Arms: Assault

The portable franchise makes it big on PS3

5 Turok

Turok is back and packing a pretty mighty bite



MOST WANTED

We quite like these games, how about you? To have your say, log on to the Next3 forum and vote on the games you want to see make the list. Go to www.next3.co.uk to join in.

Next3 Top Ten	Reader Top Ten
☐ Resident Evil 5	☐ Metal Gear Solid 4
☐ Metal Gear Solid 4	☐ Grand Theft Auto IV
☐ Grand Theft Auto IV	☐ Assassin's Creed
☐ Assassin's Creed	☐ Tony Hawk's Project 8
☐ Tekken 6	☐ SingStar
☐ Resistance: Fall Of Man	☐ Resistance: Fall Of Man
☐ Heavenly Sword	☐ Resident Evil 5
☐ Virtua Fighter 5	☐ Final Fantasy XIII
☐ Devil May Cry 4	☐ Haze
☐ Final Fantasy XIII	☐ Genji 2

Growing Pains

Fed up of mother/wifey/life partner constantly moaning? Now it's our turn

MONEY EQUALS SUCCESS. Despite being continually fooled by the pull-my-finger gag we're not totally naive and we know how the world works, money talks, bullshit walks and the rich get richer. But in the heady world of videogames, money isn't always the answer as no amount of cash can make a bad game good. But this month Ubisoft's CEO Yves Guillemot ruffled our feathers by suggesting that money makes the man or in this case the games. 'I think it's our investment in the next-generation consoles. We invest more in the next-generation than our competitors so will create better quality games.' Said Guillemot in a recent interview.

Ubisoft has put its money to good use on 360, producing games like *Ghost Recon: AWF* but it's also let out some turkeys like *Over G* and *King Kong* – so money needs innovation and attention to detail to be a success.

next month

PS3 SEP/OCT

Whether it's games, Blu-ray releases or PlayStation 3 downloads, stick with us and you won't miss a trick this month

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	4 **CD Release** **Alien Sex Farm - Para-Abnormal.** Okay, so you got us: we have no idea if this is any good. But with a name like Alien Sex Farm who couldn't be interested?	5	6 **Event: The Initiative's Game Writers Conference** A two-day event dedicated to those interested in the art of videogames storytelling.	7 **Event: IBC 2006** The creation, management and delivery of content for the entertainment industry is the focus of IBC 2006. Of special interest is the whole day dedicated to the advent of HDTV.	8	9
10	11 **CD Release: Justin Timberlake - Future Sex/Love Sounds** Something tells us it'll be just as whiny as his previous endeavours albeit with phat beats, mad sound effects and lots of verbal humping.	12	13	14 **Next3 issue 2 Out Now** Easily the most important day this month: the second issue of your new favourite PlayStation magazine hits the stands. Next3 is officially two issues old!	15	16
17	18 **CD Release: The Killers - Sam's Town.** The Killers release their second album - a purportedly darker outing than the excellent *Hot Fuss*. Let's just hope it isn't as dark (read: rubbish) as Keane's second album.	19 **Blu-ray US Release: A Knight's Tale** Could-be *Batman Begins 2* Joker Heath Ledger stars with should-be *Batman Begins 2* Joker Paul Bettany in this fun jousting medieval comedy.	20	21	22 **Event: Tokyo Game Show** Everyone's favourite nutter Ken Kutaragi is giving the pre-show keynote, entitled 'The next-generation as created by the PlayStation 3'. Should be interesting.	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30 **Event: Mangattack 2006!** Where else can you find Cloud Strife, Leon S Kennedy and Solid Snake in the same room? (Apart from Kojima's dreams.) Held at the Central Hall in Hull.
1	2 **Event: GDC London** Expanding on this year's GDC theme of 'What's Next' GDC London focuses on key next-gen console development issues. Expert developers will address attendees.	3	4 **Event: London Games Summit** Chief execs, departmental directors and investors will address next-gen business issues and strategies for expanding market opportunities in a number of seminars.	5 **Event: British Academy Video Games Awards** Ahost of other high profile videogames duke it out for the top awards. Best Gameplay, Innovation and Screenplay are just some of the awards.	6	7

NEXT ISSUE next3 ON SALE 12 OCT

Team Talk

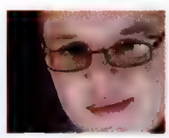
What we're most looking forward to this month...

NICK

The videogame BAFTAs are always good for a laugh. Infamous for its inaccurate awards (one year it gave *MediEvil 2* Game Of The Year), it is at least a night for the games industry to dress up in tuxecos and pretend that videogames are art. They're not, by the way.

CRAIG

All this talk about *Resident Evil 5* and *Devil May Cry 4* and the next *Metal Gear Solid* is certainly exciting. However, the one thing I'm looking forward to above all else is the new *Killers* album. Oh, and Ken's speech at the Tokyo Game Show.

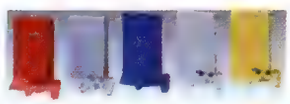


TOM

With a rolling demo of *Resident Evil 5* and playable demos of both *Devil May Cry 4* and *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots* on PS3 this, the tenth year of the Tokyo Game Show couldn't be more exciting. Here's hoping I get to go, hint, hint, Jonesey.

KEITH

As much as I try not to I do quite like Justin Timberlake, any man who can grow his own massive party Afro is okay with me. Oh and he's managed to snag Camron Diaz at the age of, what is he? 12? His new album might be worth a listen too, if just to hear the future sex and love sounds.



Back In The Day

Looking back at PlayStation past

We're not *all* about the future; sometimes it's good to look back. So, don't ask how but we've travelled back to this month in gaming history and brought you some information you didn't know (and will probably never need to)...

FIVE YEARS AGO

OCTOBER 2001

- Sony sells over 20 million PS2s worldwide and boasts over 300 titles. To celebrate, it launches a special 'European Automobile colour collection' only 2,000 of each colour are made.

ELEVEN YEARS AGO (SOMEONE CAN'T COUNT FOR SHIT)

SEPTEMBER 1997

- The *Tomb Raider* franchise, will be exclusive to PlayStation. And SCEE will be launching a new value pack containing, two controllers and a memory card for the princely some of £129.

Knowledge is power...

- The UK's biggest videogame magazine
- Written by gamers for gamers
- Unbiased opinions
- Over 70 pages of the latest previews and reviews
- Massive section dedicated to Retro games every month

ISSUE 48 ON SALE 7 SEPTEMBER

The multi-award winning MULTIFORMAT magazine - available from all good newsagents or call for a copy direct on 0870 843 1097

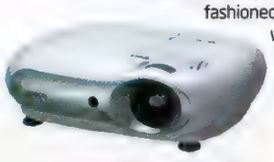
Pushing the plunger with the weight of opinion!

THE PRICE OF NEXT-GEN GAMING

ADDING UP THE COST OF PS3 GAMING

TOP GEAR

The get the most out of your next-gen technology, you'll need a new TV, some of that Dolby surround sound technology and possible a new broadband connection. Here's a handy guide!



EPSON EMP-TW20 DREAMIO LCD HOME PROJECTOR
~~£489.99~~
Few people consider a home projector when buying a new TV, but for the space conscious gamer who doesn't mind too much about getting the best colour or picture, an old fashioned projector is well worth a thought.

SAMSUNG 32" HIGH DEFINITION LCD TV WITH FREEVIEW LE32R74BDX/XEU BLACK/SILVER
~~£819.99~~
The lower end of the market, this is an obvious choice for anyone looking to upgrade to HDTV. Coming with freeview out of the box, it's perfect for your first upgrade.

SAMSUNG SP50L6HDX 50" IDTV HIGH DEFINITION DLP TV
£1,349.99
A keeper, this one, 50 inches of pure HD progressive scanning goodness. With two internal speakers delivering virtual 5.1, it could also save you a bundle on a sound system, as well.

SONY BRAVIA KDL-V40A12U 40" WIDESCREEN HD READY LCD TV WITH FREEVIEW
£1,858.71
A clear step up in HDTV, and with the benefit of being a Sony built piece of kit, this Bravia would be the envy of all your mates. Probably the best picture quality of any on show here.

COUNTING THE COST

PS3 will cost you but it'll cost Sony more

The specifics of the costs of PS3 are largely unknown, but through some investigative journalism, we've been able to estimate the approximate cost of each machine's manufacture. It can't be happy reading for Sony as the total figure, depending on who you believe, runs from 15% to around 50% above the retail asking price. Here's how the cost of the console breaks down based on what we know:

CELL PROCESSOR// £125
(DROPPING TO £35 BY 2009)
OPTICAL BLURAY DRIVE// £110 - £160
(DOWN TO AROUND £80 BY 2007)
GRAPHICS CHIP// £80
MEMORY// £35
HARD DRIVE// £35
EVERYTHING ELSE// £70

TOTAL// £505

PS3 COST AT RETAIL// £425
DIFFERENCE// £80

£80 X 2,000,000 (UNITS AT LAUNCH)
= £160,000,000 LOSS

Some analysts put that figure at almost double - this is a conservative estimate - which doesn't take into account the post-production costs such as shipping and launch activities. Console manufacturers have always taken a hit on launch day, but is this a step too far for Sony? We suspect not, as despite the sizeable loss, Sony is more than capable of bolstering its computer entertainment division until the console becomes popular enough to start paying for itself.

PRICE// An important topic of conversation when it comes to videogames. Yeah, sure you can rattle on about specs, high definition, convergence and all that jazz as long as you want, but overprice your console and you're always going to hit a wall when it comes to the general gaming public. Has Sony done itself up like a kipper? Is the appeal of Microsoft's console – at half the price of PlayStation 3 – too great a draw for the once loyal Sony masses? To be fair, we're not here to answer that, neither are we trying to start a blood war with the other side, we're here to address the question of value and perhaps, on a deeper level, the matter of worth.

The topic of the day seems to be very much concerned with the matter of the price of the PS3. That's a perfectly valid concern for many gamers, and indeed those looking for a complete home entertainment hub, as the frankly exorbitant price we're expected to pay on release day does indicate the possibility of a lackadaisical and ultimately abortive entry into the console market if history is anything to go by. Take the other, more expensive consoles over the years: Neo Geo at £740 (taking inflation into account), undoubtedly a quality machine, but not one that made massive inroads. Similarly, 3DO at the inflation-adjusted price of £920, and the Saturn which would now retail at £500, both failed to impress enough to make the overblown price worthwhile. That said, the original Sony console, the PlayStation hit the market at £300 (£375 with inflation), a bold move from the virgins in the field of console manufacture. PlayStation 3, however, is a different beast to anything we've seen before. We know this, as do you, but whether that pervades the wider spectrum of gaming is another matter. Will this concept of future proofing make its way into the collective consciousness enough to render the sizeable price tag insignificant? In other words, will the inherent value of PS3 outweigh the initial sting of the cost? It's that classic argument: quality or price?

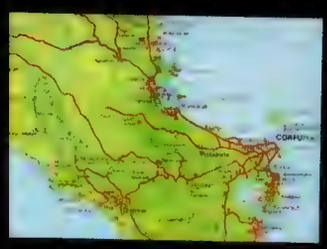
This inbuilt value is every bit as tangible as the Cell processor, the Blu-ray drive or those controversial tilt pads if you compare it to Microsoft's bundle

So what's it worth?

If you stumbled across a wallet containing £425, what would be the first thing you would do... apart from handing it in, of course?

77 kilos of marshmallow

At wholesale your £425 would equate to a little over 77 kilos (170 lbs) of marshmallow, making you, in all likelihood, the world's most important private owner. It's nice to be important, and while they'd no doubt go off before you could sell them, if you did manage it, you'd be likely to make somewhere in the region of £40. Wow!



1 week in Corfu

Corfu, eh? The perfect mix of culture, sun and nightlife for 18-30 year olds. Beautiful beaches, cosmopolitan bars and lovely sunsets every evening. It's only for a week though, so watch out for the post holiday blues.

1992 J Reg VOLVO 440 1.7 GLT

Five doors, manual, hatchback, blue, MOT till August, power steering, electric windows, central locking, sunroof, safe, reliable cheap family motoring, fsh, a/c, gsoh, 425 ono. Tel: 01202 586246.

Lady of the night

Not being quite that desperate, we're not entirely sure just what quality of woman you could get for your 425 notes, but we reckon if you look around you're bound to be able to haggle your way into a week's worth of illegal nookie.

PlayStation 3

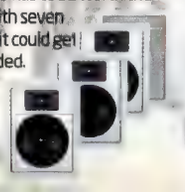
Clearly the most useful option if you've got your 400-odd quid at the ready come November, we're sure you'll agree. Let's face it, if you wanted to blow your cash on marshmallows you'd probably be reading Marshmallow Monthly, wouldn't you?

60" GRAND WEGA™ SXRD™ REAR PROJECTION HDTVKDS-60A2000
£1,999
Useful for when you need something big to impress the ladies, while it's a rear projection affair, it is perfectly happy running HD.

SOUNDMATTERS MAINSTAGE ™
£100
Another idea slightly outside the box, this single speaker offers faux 5.1 stereo sound without all those wires. We're not sure if it works, but the technology's been around for a while, and it's only 100 nicker.

BOSE CINEMATE® DIGITAL HOME CINEMA SPEAKER SYSTEM
£499.00
Fairly lightweight, and one of the least invasive systems, this is a great choice for anyone who doesn't want the hassle of awkward surround sound.

JBL HTI THEATER PACK 7 HTI6 SPEAKERS FOR 7.1 SURROUND SYSTEMS
$871.50
Mwahh hahahaaaa. 7.1, yes, 7.1 Surround Sound, with 100 watts of power to enhance your home gaming and cinema experience has to be worth the money. With seven speakers, it could get overcrowded.



BEOLAB 6000
£995.00 (for 2)
Designed, apparently, to disappear, these speakers can be set up how you want, and with stunning sound quality and clean lines, they're a must for any style-savvy gamers out there.

BOSE ACOUSTIMASS® 15 HOME CINEMA SPEAKER SYSTEM
£1,049.00
Bose's Acoustimass 15-speaker system is all about being bathed in crystal clear sound from every direction. It's upgradeable to 6.1 and with its dinky speakers shouldn't create too much mess in your front room.

nextmedia everyone's talking about...

...the price of next-gen gaming

PRICE PREDICTOR

of hidden costs – something we'll detail later. Of course the price of your shiny black box could very well skyrocket should you have both the inclination and funding to assemble the kind of setup that maximises the potential of the console. Indeed, your individual costs could be anything from the initial £425 right up to well over £10,000 depending on your needs. With the estimated ten-year life span of the machine, a majority of PS3 owners are unlikely to be forking out the big bucks until things like HDTVs and top-end sound systems drop below their affordability threshold, and there's always the issue of Blu-ray redundancy: should Sony lose this one, and Blu-ray were to go the way of the UMD, PS3 owners will no doubt be a little peeved about shelling out for a home media centre that can't play the predominant storage medium.

What do you get for your money then? You're probably more than aware of the range of functions that the PS3 can perform – it's an unrivalled piece of kit in the realm of contemporary electronics and will more than likely remain so for a good few years. Top-notch gaming with, if previous generations are anything to go by, some of the best exclusives, complete backwards compatibility, Internet access (albeit pretty ropey from what we've seen), high-definition playback, movie and music downloads, PSP functionality, video chat, innovative wireless tilt control technology and a 20 or 60 GB hard drive all encased in sexy black plastic. The idea of forking out £425 for all that doesn't seem quite so silly any more does it? What is even better still is that you're getting all of that straight out of the box. Literally, the second you hastily unpack the thing with your sweaty, shaking hands you have it all – a bone fide promise from Sony.

At the risk of sounding like an advertisement or door-to-door salesman, what other options do you have? Can you afford not to? Granted, you're never going to save money – as Sony may have you believe – by ditching your PC in favour of the PS3, but more than ever before, the games console is a life-changing investment. Gone are the days of buying a gaming device and plugging it into your TV, taking second place to an array of VCRs, DVD players and set-top boxes. The PS3 is a central piece of equipment – of that there's little doubt – central not only to your gaming, but to all your media needs, and if you're anything like us, central to your entire life.

Xbox 360 Vs PS3

360 may be cheaper off-the-shelf, but what do you have to spend to get it up to spec?

PS3

SCART // £0
ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION // £0
WIRELESS CONTROLLER // £0
PLAY AND CHARGE KIT // £0
WIRELESS INTERNET // £0
MEMORY UNIT // £0
HD MOVIES // £0

£0 // ZIP, NADA, NIL, NOTHING, ZILCH, BUGGER ALL, ZERO, NUL, POUNDS.

X360

SCART // £17.99
ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION // £40
WIRELESS CONTROLLER // £32.99
PLAY AND CHARGE KIT // £14.99
WIRELESS INTERNET // £59.99
MEMORY UNIT // £22.99
HD MOVIES // £200 (APPROX)

£388.99 // ALL THOSE EXTRAS COULD PUT YOUR BANK BALANCE INTO THE RED WELL AFTER YOU'VE FORKED OUT FOR THE CONSOLE

TESCO VALUE BROADBAND
1Gb cap
512 Kb
13.97
They say every little helps, but it's unlikely to help you in your attempted dominance of the PS3's online service, but at £13.97 and very few hidden costs, this could be a good starter for anyone who gets paid around the same as us.

TELEWEST STANDARD BROADBAND
2Mb
12 month contract
14.99
Reasonably cheap, and rated reasonably by customers, the reasonably fast speed should appeal to the more reasonably minded gamers out there. Also comes with £10 cashback. Why?

TALKTALK FREE BROADBAND (WITH HOME PHONE WITH TALK3 INTERNATIONAL)
Monthly £9.99 (+11.00 line rental + £29.99 activation)
18 month contract 8Mb
Quite exactly how they manage to get away with calling this free is beyond us, but with a phone line included and a sexy download speed of 8Mb, there's little else to complain about.

VIRGIN 8 GB
Unlimited download Limit
No contract
£24.99
8 gig's pretty quick, and whilst you're not likely to be making the most of it with your PS3 in the near future, Virgin's package comes with free booze vouchers. Sign us up!

TELEWEST BROADBAND ELITE
£35.99
10 Mb 12 month
24 hour
Perfectly suited to online gaming, but probably a little over the top for your current needs, the most expensive of our choices comes with 24 hour customer service, and no activation costs.

The digital photography magazine for enthusiasts and pros

Digital Photographer

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Outdoor photo techniques
- Interview with Thomas Marent
- 20 SLR tips
- Panoramic prints group test

AVAILABLE FROM ALL GOOD NEWSAGENTS
OR CALL FOR A COPY DIRECT ON...

+44(0)870 428 8353

TwitchGaming

Thoughts, imaginings and opinion from Next3's resident columnist, Twitch

Somebody Save Me

The flames are burning up my soul

I'M NOT ONE prone to bitching about trivial things. Honestly. It's an area I leave to wittering ninnies plaguing message boards and comment boxes, who seemingly exist only to get into petty flame wars regarding unimportant things and then refuse to back down. After all, the one thing you will never find online is someone admitting they are wrong. I mostly choose to counter that by ignoring the goons completely. But it's finally happened. The idiots have done it. I'm officially annoyed and it's over something trivial. I am Twitch and I'm here to vent.

Like a good many PlayStation hopefuls, I recently learned of Sony's plans to see the release of a peripheral allowing gamers to transfer PSOne and PS2 memory card saves onto their PS3 hard drives. I decided to do some digging around and found a number of websites reporting on the matter. The optimist inside me was brimming with excitement that I wouldn't have to begin *Pro Evo* and other such games from the beginning – and could just transfer the files straight over. No problem. The cynic inside me was lying in a pool of his own blood, brain exposed and with matter leaking out after the optimist beat him to a pulp. After all, it's a cause worth celebrating. It's a good thing... right?

Well, apparently not. To my utter disgust I found an abundance of people bitching and moaning about how money-hungry Sony is demanding folks – who are already slapping down hundreds of pounds for a PS3 – spend a fraction of that price on one pretty frigging useful peripheral. And I wasn't at all surprised to find a fair portion of Xbox 360 aficionados joining in with the vitriol – hiding behind the relative safety of their Bill boxes. But more on that later.

The absolute worst thing I found were several clearly devoted Sony fans drowning in that sea of hate – people who shared the same opinion as me and saw the good in all this. But every time a point was made from one of these individuals – such as how useful it is and that we should be grateful Sony even considered it – it was immediately shot down by the haters, refuted. These individuals can't seem to give Sony a break. It's not in their nature. You can take a horse to water, but you can't get him excited about PS3.

It's true that there is room for complaint. Phil Harrison's claims that there are over 100 Blu-ray titles on shelves are clearly rubbish. The PS3 that was shown at last year's E3 has changed design somewhat over the course, for better or worse. The tilt pad came out of nowhere – even surprising some PS3 developers. Kaz Hirai's comments about Microsoft constantly copying Sony are also somewhat psychotic. And then there's the price... which I believe is entirely justified when you consider that Sony is planning for the future.

But people can't see that. People can't see the wonderful games that are in development currently, or the fact that second-generation PS3 games are going to be created from the ground up with tilt pad functionality, thus forcing developers to think of more intuitive game design rather than how it can feature in current games. People can't seem to grasp the fact that Sony is a market leader in home entertainment and knows a thing or two about consumers, and what they ultimately want – even if they don't think they want it just yet.

No, all these people are seeing is Sony trying to pry more money out of their hands for some superfluous device. But it isn't superfluous – it's a damn good thing and Xbox 360 owners who were bitching would do well to remember Microsoft never offered gamers the same opportunity with 360. It took third-party company's to develop such a peripheral. This clearly states that amid the hyperbole Sony cares. It's already considered how important such a device is to you and I and it's creating it for our benefit. It's doing everything for our benefit, but it falls on us to see through that tundra of hate. Hopefully the naysayers will – and then they will stop bitching about stupid things.

The Sony backlash has reached lunatic proportions and it's getting silly. People are looking for any excuse to complain – even when it's such a trivial thing as this. See also: GamesRadar's piece on a life-sized wooden PS3 unit compared to the size of 360 invoking haters to complain about PS3's size. It needs to stop. We have a forum now where good people care about the PS3, so feel free to leave your comments on this subject there. Flame me if you like. I won't reply to you however, because I know when to stop.

Twitch

twitch@imagine-publishing.co.uk

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THE NEW retro GAMER

"Just beautiful. It's the only magazine I've bought in years that I actually want to keep!"

"The look and feel is much classier"

"10 out of 10 for the magazine"

"Picked up a copy of Retro Gamer... WOW!"

"Reading through the new issue – absolutely amazing!"

I'll definitely be buying it every month. I can't remember the last time I actually sat down and properly read a gaming magazine."

THE NEW LOOK

retro GAMER

BACK, BIGGER AND BETTER

ON SALE NOW

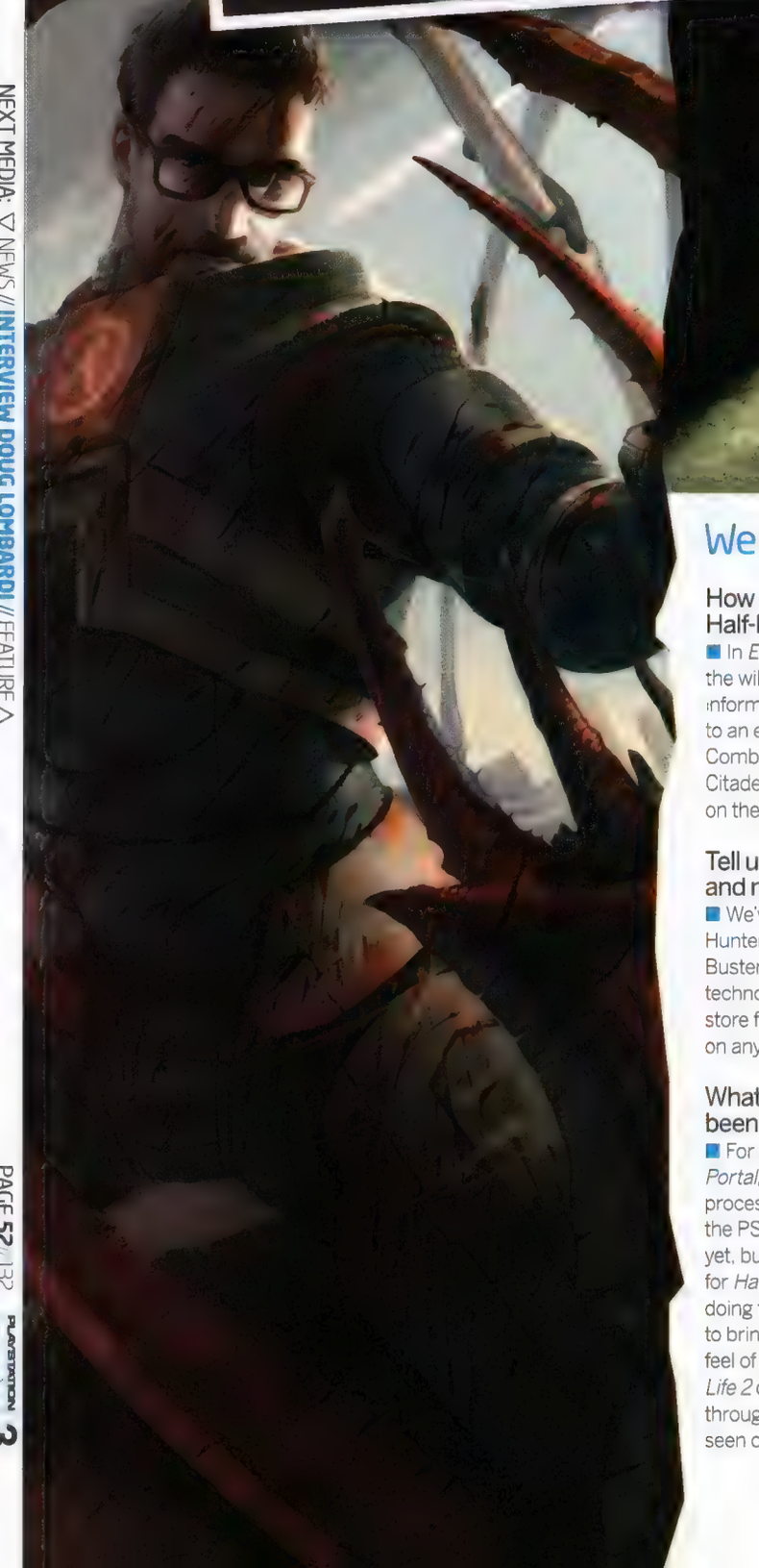
TO SUBSCRIBE TELEPHONE:

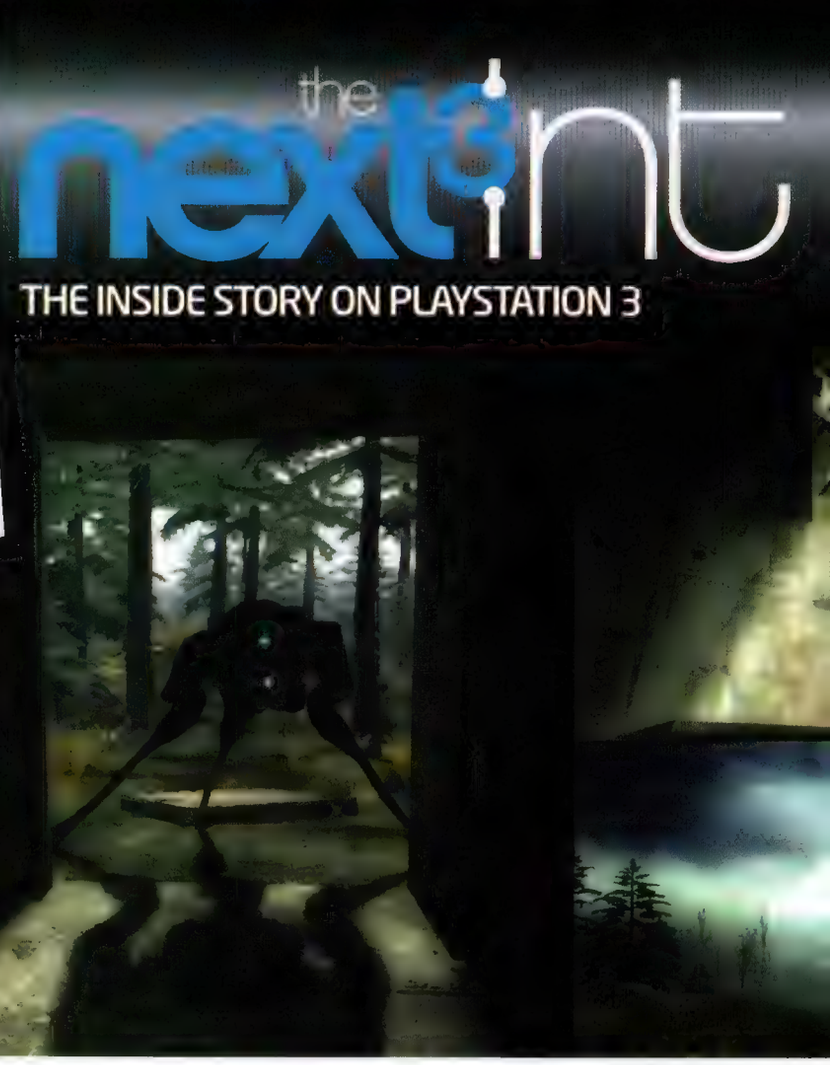
0870 428 8359

DOUG LOMBARDI, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, VALVE

the next int

THE INSIDE STORY ON PLAYSTATION 3





We speak to Valve's Doug Lombardi about how

How does Episode 2 continue the Half-Life 2 story?

In *Episode Two*, the player races across the wilderness north of City 17 to bring an information packet stolen from the Citadel to an enclave of resistance scientists. The Combine are in disarray after the fall of the Citadel, but are regrouping and advancing on the resistance position.

Tell us about some of the surprises and new additions?

We've revealed one new creature, the Hunter; and one new weapon, the Strider Buster. And there are many story surprises, technology updates, and other surprises in store for everyone who plays *Episode Two* on any platform.

What, if any, enhancements have been made to the PS3 versions?

For *Episode Two*, *Team Fortress 2* and *Portal*, we will be leveraging the unique processing and networking capabilities of the PS3. We haven't announced specifics yet, but we will closer to launch. Meanwhile, for *Half-Life 2* and *Episode One*, we will be doing fairly major graphic passes on each to bring them more in line with the look and feel of *Episode Two*. So, for example, *Half-Life 2* on the PS3 will feature HDR lighting throughout the game, which was never seen on the PC versions.

Is the PlayStation 3 iteration of Half-Life 2 a port from the PC or Xbox version?

All our development begins on the PC.

What are your plans for Half-Life 2: Episode 3, and how far do you see the series going in this episodic format?

As a trilogy, this adventure will conclude with *Episode Three* which is targeted for release during the holiday season of 2007. Once this trilogy is complete, we will evaluate what comes next and in what format.

Do you see episodic content as being the future of videogaming, and what do you see as the main benefits or possible drawbacks?

By moving to smaller and more regular releases of content, we've eliminated the burden of financial and schedule risks. *Portal* is a good example of doing something that would be too risky to try out in a traditional, multi-year, mega-million-dollar project.

It also allows us to move technology forward in steady steps and deliver new functionality faster than is possible with monolithic releases. HDR and our new lighting model are examples of technology we've shipped through Steam updates and in episodic releases since *Half-Life 2*'s launch. And soon a PS3 version of the engine will be available.

erview

Half Life 2 is getting a new lease of life on PS3

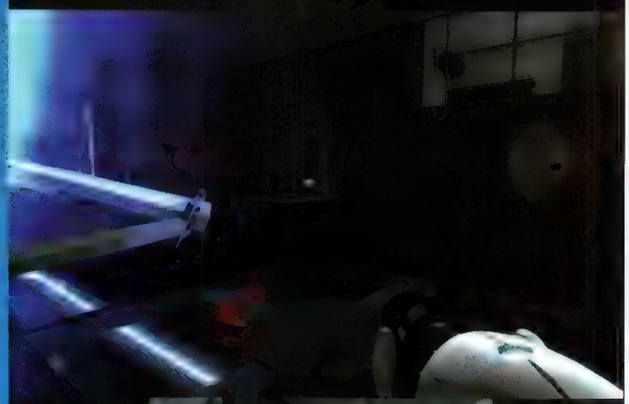
The bottom line is that we're finding episodic development is allowing us to move our content and technology forward more efficiently.

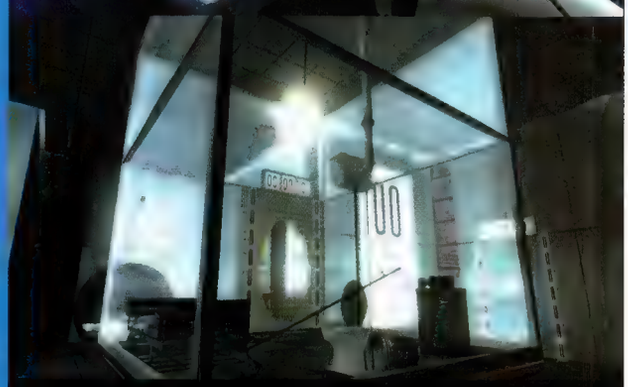
With an increased focus on the console market, do you think that digital distribution will be a viable avenue for gamers with this generation of consoles, or do you think it will remain the preserve of PC gamers?

■ All forms of electronic content will become more and more available through direct distribution while maintaining a presence at retail. Many have been exploring direct distribution via the PC for quite some time, so there's a natural lead on that platform. But there's no inherent reason why it must remain exclusively bound to PCs.

Being famed for listening to feedback from gamers, to what extent will you be considering console gamers' feedback?

■ All customers are equal in our minds – in fact, we probably have more to learn from the console customers.





GOING PORTAL

Doug Lombardi explains the creation of Portal

We understand the original Narbacular Drop team is now completely under the employment of Valve. How did that come about?

■ The members of NB team were seniors at DigiPen Institute here in the Seattle area and created NB as their senior class project, which is shown at a showcase to local devs and publishers. Some Valve folk attended, thought it was great, and invited them to the offices to show everyone. Gabe immediately loved it and basically offered them jobs on the spot.

Portal is to be set within the Half-Life universe, but how will it tie in with the official canon of the series?

■ You play a new character in the *HL* universe, but that's all I can say for now, more details will be released later.

The technology behind Portal could have the impact on gaming that bullet time in The Matrix had within the film industry – how do you see it being used in the future?

■ We agree. But first, we need to ship the first *Portal* game!

PLAYSTATION 3
SONY

TALKING 'BOUT NEXT GENERATION

Press releases can be truly terrifying. With a little clever wordplay and a couple of stock phrases for good measure, **even the most wretched of games can be made to sound like a modern-day classic**. And with PlayStation 3 now very much in sight, an obscene amount of these press releases are now trying to out-next-gen one another with the amazing way the game in question could never have been done before. With all due respect, how much better can, say, a snooker game get? **Will the fact that the balls are 23 per cent shinier actually make for a better game?** It seems unlikely. So while the world around us throws nonsensical statements around in attempting to define what the important ingredients in next-gen gaming are, we dig deeper to discover what elements really will set PlayStation 3 and its software apart from their predecessors. And no, ball shininess isn't one of them.

NEXT-GEN STAPLES

What should make a next-gen game

A city as a skate park? Neversoft has tried it before but failed.

SCALE THE SIZE OF THE GAME IS IRRELEVANT, IT'S THE DEPTH THAT IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT

SCALE When it comes to next-gen gaming, bigger is better

Clocking in at some 35 times the power of PS2, PlayStation 3 is naturally capable of throwing around polygons like they're going out of fashion. The trap here is obvious but we can all but guarantee that this won't stop many early titles falling into it as it's very easy to crank up the detail and churn out games. What many developers will undoubtedly overlook here is the importance of a new element brought to the fore by this enhanced technology, namely the size issue. Nobody will care how many billion polygons make up the face of a character if they can't see more than ten metres in front of them, and to this point this has presented a problem – how do you balance detail and scale? But with the processing power of PS3, there's no reason that games can't look great and showcase an amazing sense of scale. Why? Because other next-gen games on another next-gen console are already doing it.

While only rumoured for PS3 at the moment, Bethesda's exceptional RPG *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* shows what can be done in terms of size and sheen. The game juggles its beautiful looks and massive setting with ease and the moment you get out into the wide world is jaw-dropping. You can see for miles around: forests, mountains, plains and seas trailing into the distance, reminding you that you're part of a huge world. Back in the realms of the official titles, *Tony Hawk's Project 8* will also play heavily on this sense of scale, and while *American Wasteland* may have lied about its allegedly continuous and free-roaming environments, *Project 8* genuinely is one massive skate park. "Previous games' levels had circuits. We tried to keep the player in a circular path through the level so they could have seamless lines," explains Neversoft's Brian Bright. "This year the whole world is completely seamless. This opens up lines and combo opportunities never before possible – everything flows together so you never have to stop skating."

PlayStation 2 managed some pretty huge games in its time and among the largest was a game which already has a PS3 sequel announced, a little title by the name of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. Having created a game world the size of a small American state is an achievement that will take some bettering, but if anyone can do it we're quietly confident that it's Rockstar – the firm's track record with the *GTA* series is nothing short of impeccable and it seems hugely unlikely that its next-generation debut would be the first turkey in years. So whether it be massive landscapes around you that make you feel like an ant, or a sprawling city where the world is your proverbial oyster, a sense of scale is something that will go from being impressive to being essential over the life of the PlayStation 3.

Oblivion **proves that *GTA*-style freedom can work for other genres.**

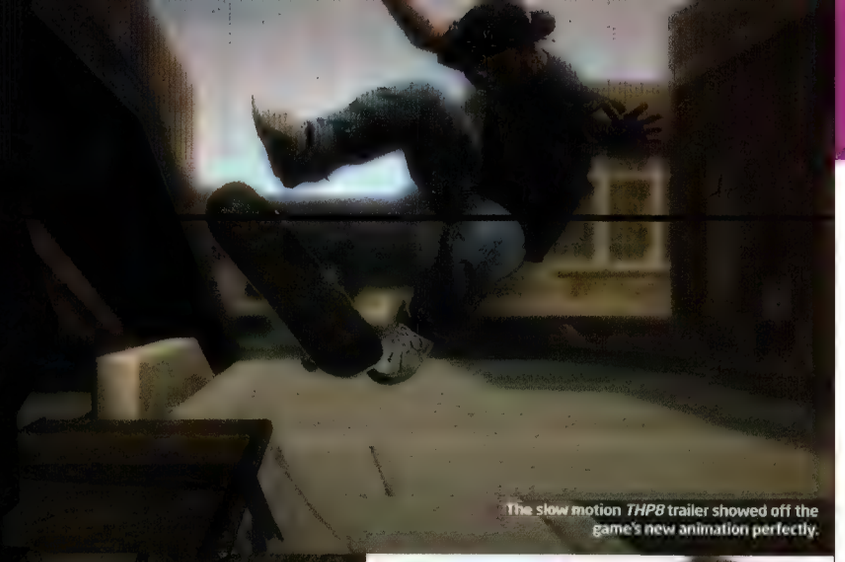
FREEDOM Why shouldn't you be able to do what you want, when you want to do it?

While the days of linear gameplay experiences are far from over, technological advancements in hardware have really broadened the horizons of gaming and the once straight A-to-B progression of many games gives way to free reign to swing by C, D, E, F, G... well, you get the point. Somehow, we just managed to go a whole sentence without mentioning *Grand Theft Auto III*, the game that first brought true freedom to the masses for an entire generation. Rectified, Rockstar's controversial series has spawned many imitators and inspired countless games across all manner of genres, and now the lessons that it taught us have become boxes that need to be checked rather than mere suggestions. Players will now come to expect choices about how missions are tackled, how downtime is used and how to approach situations rather than have a game hold their hand from boot-up to closing credits roll.

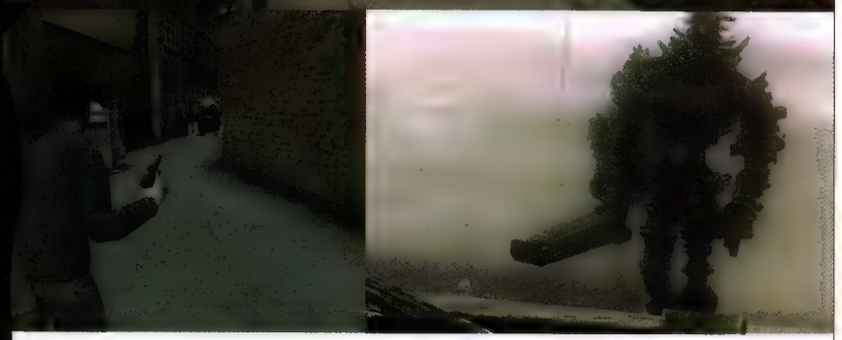
Having pretty much perfected platforming for PS2 with *Prince Of Persia*, who better than Ubisoft to lead the charge into the next generation? *Assassin's Creed* looks to follow in the footsteps of the Prince's adventures, but the key difference here will be how you get around – rather than following a preset pattern of jumps, swings and slides to reach a certain area, total freedom is offered to the player in how they want to reach their goal. This level of freedom will be massively important in making games feel more open and personal than they have previously, and while it takes some serious structural work to make an open game world flow as it should, its an important area in which next-gen gaming will grow.

But can too much freedom be a bad thing? As games increase in scope, its possible that laziness could begin to set in with some developers, and the player be left to their own devices in a game world that they don't really understand. Jeff Kaplan, lead designer on Blizzard's hugely popular *World Of Warcraft*, explains to us the importance of proper pacing and structure. "Story and plot are extremely important. Story is a driving element in forging an immersive experience while plot can be used as a pacing mechanism. So much of creating quality gameplay comes through manipulation of pacing." This is where it falls to developers to give clues and pointers to the player – the ringing phones of *The Godfather* reminded wandering souls of missions they should be doing while *GTA*'s underlying narratives and the sheer strength of the cities themselves have made exploration and mission-to-mission travel genuinely entertaining. Freedom is important, yes, but not at the expense of structure.

Too much freedom and the player could get bored quickly.



The slow motion *THP8* trailer showed off the game's new animation perfectly.



ANIMATION Why movement is far more important than polygon counts in the end

This generation saw a startling rise in the use of physics over traditional animation with the rise of rag doll implementation, but the results are far from perfect. So just as motion capture technology needed to be spliced with traditional animation techniques to create coherent and believable movement from characters, rag doll too is having to be added to in order to create more than just twitching, lifeless bodies. Neversoft's work with *Tony Hawk's Project 8* is one of the most notable advances in this field – while even the basic animation is now created by various different situational motions all acting at once to give fluid and unique movement, improvements to existing rag doll physics engines see another set of motions applied to the limp bodies of fallen skaters. This allows characters to react to injuries sustained during a bail rather than just skimming across the level in a flurry of limbs, and this kind of refinement of motion will no doubt become commonplace going into the next generation.

"In the past for grind balance animations, we'd just have one pose that would kind of jiggle back and forth," explains Neversoft's Brian Bright. "Here, though, we have multiple animations and at times we can have up to 40 different animations playing on the skater." This kind of layering is often used in many other elements of games such as texturing and audio so why not apply it to animation too? The end result is simply superb and the grace and fluidity shown by the new system makes the previous games in the series look almost as lazy as *Rayman*'s lack of limbs.

There will be people out there that will downplay the importance of this aesthetic progression and while it does certainly have the 'eye candy' factor, you might be surprised to hear that improved animation can actually change the way many games can be played. "Our goal was to make it so clear through these animations that you wouldn't even need the balance meter any more," Bright tells us giving a great example of how performance can be construed through animation if done properly. But why stop there? Games like *The Getaway* have hinted at using the same concept for health, and while it's unlikely that such visual flourish will ever truly replace the classic HUD, there's a lot that clever developers can tell the players through animation. Even simple idle animations that change when enemies are nearby could do away with the overly popular 'radars' of so many games, and with a little thought there's no telling how far this kind of concept can be taken.

Still, no review of PS3 *Killzone* will claim it to be superior to the PS2 game based purely on the new reload animations. In the grand scheme of things, animation takes a back seat to more crucial elements such as level design and narrative, but in terms of adding to a game's atmosphere and drawing you into a world, good animation is absolutely imperative – you needn't look further than *Shadow Of The Colossus*' hulking behemoths, driven hero and wonderful steed for proof of this.

GET OUT OF OUR GAMES

Naming and shaming the gaming elements that need to be laid to rest

A bad camera can render a perfectly good game useless.

BROKEN AI Given that PlayStation 3 has been cited as one per cent of the power of the human brain, surely it's time enemies and allies alike stop being cretinous strafe fiends and actually put up some kind of a fight. It's been proven – possible in not only this but previous generations too – so with the increase in processing power, there's no reason that AI routines shouldn't see enemies working together in perfect harmony rather than hobbling left and right while occasionally thinking about shooting. And when opponents put up more of a fight, the game in question benefits greatly from being that much more rewarding. We're not saying we want to be beaten down every time we pick up a controller. It's just that far too few games offer any kind of genuine challenge these days, preferring instead to rely on cheap difficulty increases such as bumping up the number of headshots a guy takes to die. Look at *Call Of Duty 2*'s Veteran setting and take it from there (as no doubt Infinity Ward's *Call Of Duty 3* will) and you'll see that it is possible to implement more challenging adversaries while still sticking to a fair and believable rule set.

BAD THINGS WHILE PS3'S HARD DRIVE WILL HELP IT WON'T IRRADICATE LOADING TIMES COMPLETELY

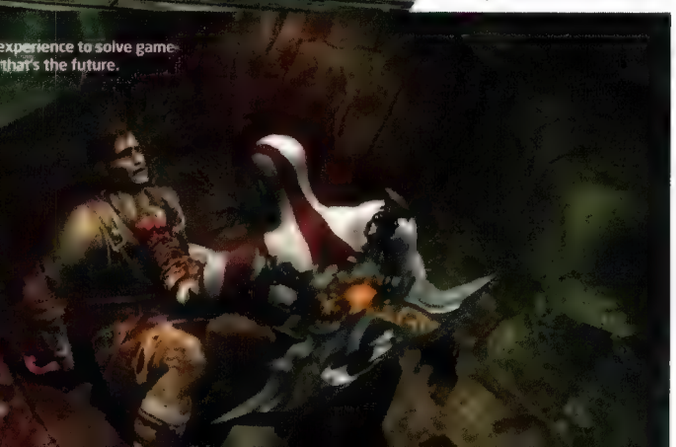
INVISIBLE WALLS The bane of every explorative gamer's existence, the invisible wall is by far and away the easiest way for a developer to ruin their game with minimal fuss. However good a game may be, stumbling upon one of these cheap barriers immediately kills any sense of atmosphere and involvement the game may have conjured up, snapping back with the harsh reality that its only a game. But why stop at banishing the barriers you can't see when those you can are often still more annoying? Many a hero has been stalled or diverted in their quests by ankle-high barriers that could easily be traversed or gaping holes in scenery that the game refuses to recognise as such. As games get closer to looking more lifelike than even what you see when you look out of a window, there's absolutely no excuse for this kind of silliness any more – the more 'realistic' games get, the more glaringly horrible and out of place such elements will become. You have been warned.

DODGY CAMERAS Come on, you know what we're talking about. You're lining up for that inch-perfect jump to get some worthless collectable when all of a sudden the viewpoint goes haywire and before you know it, you've lost lives, time and sanity through no fault of your own. The dynamic cameras of many of today's games mean that there is always likely to be at least one area that causes the virtual cameraman to go a little loco, but through proper testing or thoughtful pre-planning, it can certainly be eliminated – fixed viewpoints as seen in *God Of War* and *Resident Evil 4* are by far the easiest way to realise this but there's little doubt that even the fully controllable viewpoint can be tweaked to near perfection this generation.

If next gen is to really impress, character AI needs to be better.

There's nothing like an invisible wall to shatter a videogame's illusion.

When game worlds make sense they become more believable.



BELIEVABILITY

Time for games to get a whole lot more convincing

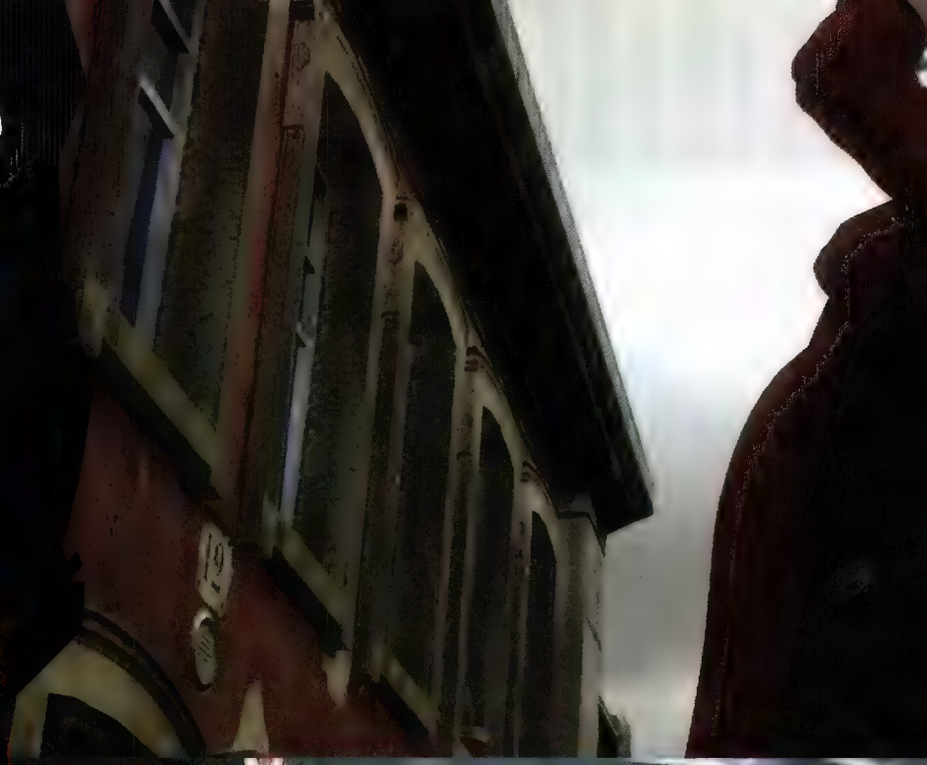
If real life adhered to the same rules as many videogames, things would be a hell of a lot different. Forensics teams would have to leg it to crime scenes before the bodies and evidence vanished into nothingness; every boy racer could become a millionaire in a day or so by participating in the same simple street race over and over until their bank balance overflowed; every soldier could rest safe in the knowledge he could respawn after death. The more realistic a game may look, the more people will expect real-world laws to apply, and although much of gaming is about escapism, believability should apply even to those games which are, by their very nature, unbelievable. Games such as *Katamari Damacy* achieve this coherence through physics and momentum while something like *God Of War* achieves it through weight and brutality. There are many ways to make the player believe in a game, its world and its characters, even in something so simple as two people having a fight.

With games like *Virtua Fighter 5*, the synergy of everything from character movement to impacts of and reactions to blows makes for a genuinely believable ruck. Nobody is throwing fireballs here, Sega's brawler instead throwing out some of the most visually impressive and balletic bouts ever to grace screens. These are all genuine moves that real people can feasibly pull off and when coupled with the increased realism of the rest of the game, you have something that looks and feels much more genuine on your hands.

Also important in maintaining believability is the concept of persistence. Things like the magical appearing/disappearing traffic seen in the likes of *Grand Theft Auto* and *Driver* now need to be addressed in order to give the impression that this game world truly exists around the player. Which brings us back to *Assassin's Creed* – while IO's crowdwork for the Mardi Gras level of *Hitman: Blood Money* certainly showcased some impressive hardware usage, Ubisoft's bloodthirsty adventure is set to capitalise upon the additional power of PlayStation 3 and take things to a whole new level. The minimal interaction and repetition present in Agent 47's mass mingling is gone, with *Assassin's Creed*'s lead character actively forcing his way through a rammed street like a fan at a Take That concert clamouring to get close to everyone's favourite blob of talent Gary Barlow for one last time. Interaction is crucial to making a player feel like they actually exist in the game world and with PlayStation 3, you should expect to see a lot of progress made in this field.

WarHawk is the first game to use the PS3's tilt function.

Guitar Hero demonstrates how a new input type can help create new types of games.



Assassin's Creed builds on Ubisoft's experience making *Prince Of Persia*.

NEW WAYS TO PLAY
Basic controllers are so 1985...

With games like *SingStar* and *Guitar Hero* continuing to prove that games can flourish without a △ or □ button in sight, it doesn't take a genius to see the potential for expansion in this sector as consoles grow in power. While Nintendo is clearly focusing its Wii pitch around this concept, Sony's more diverse approach will allow for more traditionally controlled games as well as a number that aren't so by-the-book. Sony's E3 presentations revealed a little about plans for the new controller – specifically the fact that tilt-sensitive functionality will be built into it as shown in the *WarHawk* demo. The new controller, although lighter than its PS2 counterpart, is now capable of six-way movement without the need for external sensors or equipment and will be the standard controller for the new system.

Beyond *WarHawk*, its unclear what other games will support this tilt control, but as Nintendo is finding out, movement-based control is too vague and tiring a mechanic to be worked into every game – imagine the sweat you'd work up waving the pad around to control Dante in *Devil May Cry* – but it could make for a novel replacement for certain existing button functions. Several of the currently planned FPS titles are being mooted to use tilt control for leaning around corners, and while not a major advancement, this changes the way the games feel to play and frees up face buttons for additional controls if required.

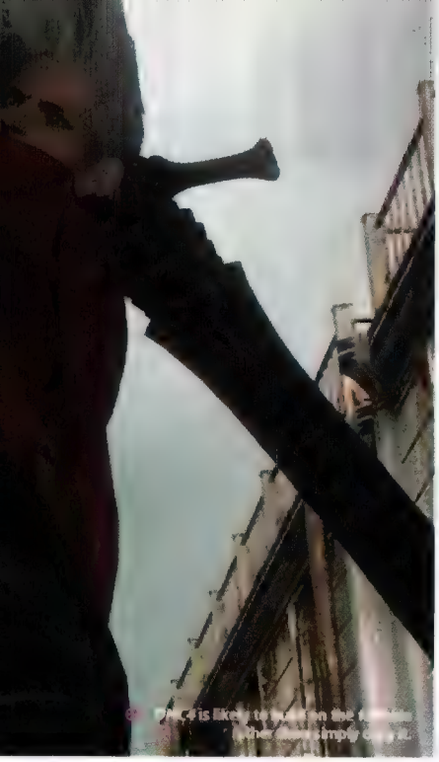
Sony has made it clear that its *SingStar* franchise will remain strong going into next year and we're sure that a wealth of other peripheral-based games will follow – Konami's *Dancing Stage* and Harmonix's sublime *Guitar Hero* will surely be pushed into the next gen at some point – we can't wait. Don't get us wrong: we're more than happy to keep controlling most of our games with the classic sticks and buttons combo, but with technology on the rise as ever and plenty of new options thrown up by both the tilt control and the overall power boost between generations, expect to see things you never thought possible or feasible in terms of game control.

REFINEMENT
Taking old favourites to the next level

While the PS3 release list is hardly crawling with new properties, there's a lot to be said for the power of existing IPs. During the life of PS2, developers created some exceptional series, many of which will no doubt see sequels. But with spiralling dev costs, playtime is over and developers need to learn from their experiences within the current gen in shaping future titles. Capcom springs to mind – Dante's rise, fall and resurgence in the space of the three *DMC* games will give the prolific Japanese developer plenty to work with while its evolution of the survival-horror genre with *Resident Evil 4* sets it in fantastic stead for the zombie-packed series to prevail on the next generation of hardware.

The chronic case of sequelitis that's plagued the industry for years shows little sign of letting up as we enter a new generation. With so much revenue having to be recouped to make a title profitable, familiar faces are a great way to go from a developer's point of view and, if these firms can learn from mistakes, also from a player's perspective. But it's not just through sequels that developers are able to learn. This third mention of *Assassin's Creed* is indicative of how strong the title looks and it clearly draws upon Ubisoft's work with *Prince Of Persia*, *Splinter Cell* and lesser known gems like *Beyond Good & Evil*. While there's always room for new ideas in gaming, there isn't much ground that hasn't been covered, but through refining old ideas and using them in combination with others, there's definitely space for new games to feel as fresh and original as those from which they draw influence.

To this end, SquareEnix's *Final Fantasy XIII* is set to follow the wonderful *XII* but take it back to the traditional RPG route rather than the MMO-inspired action, all the while oozing the production values and sheen for which the series is renowned. Another mention for the new *Tony Hawk* title too, which is in Neversoft's own words 'being rebuilt from the ground up' to make the series feel as original as its PSOne debut – new trick mechanics and a huge play area take the ideas and basics of the series to the next level while returning the focus of the game to the pure skating action. There might be a lot of numbers following titles on that PS3 release list, but for once that might not be as bad a thing as you may think.



Online gaming will also need its own new generation if it's to continue to attact subscribers.

ONLINE GAMING PUBLISHERS HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT EPISODIC GAMING FOR YEARS

Deathmatch is dead! Long live... just about any other game mode.

Don't go break-ing my heart
I could-n't if I tried

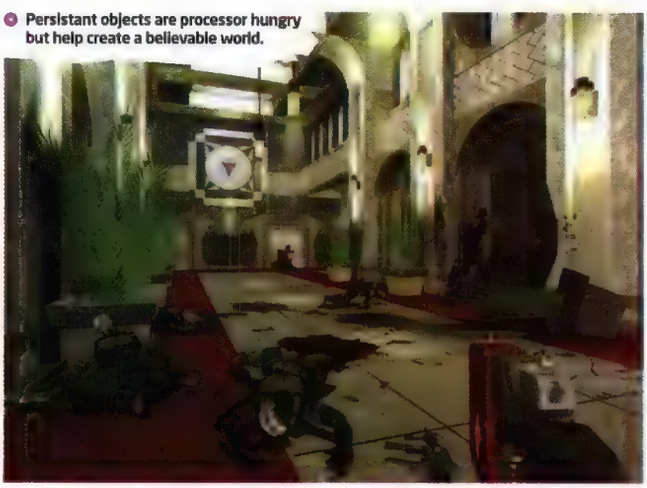
ONLINE Insert your own 'playing with yourself' gag here

People have been saying for years that all games will one day be fully online, and while it may be seen by many as little more than a distant dream, the evidence is already in place to suggest that the online revolution is very much upon us. Sony has no doubt been following the progress of Microsoft's Live service in order to challenge it after a weak online showing with PS2, and things like downloadable content and the sense of community are becoming more standard by the day. A sense of community is one thing from Xbox Live that Sony will need to tap into.

But while Sony's online service will be at the heart of the global gaming experience, it's the games that need to really capitalise on this new direction. Where local multi-player would once have been enough, online play is now not only expected but demanded by audiences embracing technological advances. Even online play is still only half of what can truly be done with a great online service and Sony has already made its commitment to online known through titles like *SingStar* – the new version announced at E3 will offer a vast choice of downloadable songs and videos rather than a slew of periodic updates and this will get not only rhythm-action fans but gamers in general thinking. Imagine *Guitar Hero 3* with an unending track list. Imagine *Gran Turismo* with tracks and cars that can be added to the roster at will. This potential is too enormous to pass up, but there's another option offered to gamers through this real online integration. Episodic content, a trend which is becoming more common as in recent PC titles such as *Bone* and *Sin Episodes*, can be offered to change the way we buy games – a cheaper first package (in either disc or download form) can contain much of the main information needed at a reduced price with further chapters of the game being made available for download at additional cost.

Online is the future. Sony Online's Chris Kramer explained to us his vision of the future and unsurprisingly, online content will factor heavily. He says. "Everything is connected these days, from your PC to your game console to your refrigerator. We will reach a point where every game has some sort of online component, whether it's a true MMO like *EverQuest*, a co-operative action-RPG like *Dark Kingdom* that allows four people to play through a game together or just a basic gateway to new content, as with *Oblivion*."

Looking through the release list so far, many of the titles present are boasting some degree of online content – while it was a minority affair before, PS3 will take global gaming to the much greater numbers through a majority of its software catalogue.



Persistant objects are processor hungry but help create a believable world.

Subscribe

SAVE 40%

The UK's first magazine 100% dedicated to PlayStation 3. Find the very best gaming, multimedia and PS3 network coverage in Next3

Unlike other PlayStation games magazines that cater for PS2 and PSP, Next3 is dedicated entirely to PlayStation 3. That means that we can give you the most in-depth PS3 coverage in the world!

THREE EASY WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE

1. Telephone

Order via credit or debit card on the phone, just call

0870 787 9817

Overseas: +44 (0) 1795 414 865

2. Online

Order via credit or debit card – just visit

www.next3.co.uk

3. Post or email

Please complete and post the form to

Next3 Subscriptions Department
800 Guillat Avenue
Kent Science Park
Sittingbourne
ME9 8GU

Or alternatively, you can scan and email the form to:

next3subs@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Call Now **0870 787 9817** or subscribe **online**

EXCLUSIVE SUBSCRIBER BENEFITS

Start a Direct Debit today from just £14.40 every six issues and save £9.60

- Save 40% on the cover price
- Free UK delivery and moneyback guarantee on any unmailed issues
- Be the first to receive the UK's best PS3 magazine!

next3 Subscription Voucher

☑ YES! I would like to subscribe to Next3

YOUR DETAILS

Title _____ First name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Postcode _____ Country _____

Telephone number _____

Mobile number _____

Email address _____

DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT

☐ UK Direct Debit Payment – only £14.40 every 6 issues (Save 40%)

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

ip IMAGINE PUBLISHING — DIRECT Debit

Please fill in the form and send it to: Next3 Subscriptions Dept., 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne ME9 8GU

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager — Bank/Building Society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Branch sort code

Bank/Building Society account number

Originator's Identification Number: 5 0 1 8 8 4

Reference Number

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society
Please pay Imagine Publishing Limited Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Imagine Publishing Limited and, if so, details will be passed on electronically to my Bank/Building Society

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account — A6 instruction form

PAYMENT DETAILS

YOUR EXCLUSIVE READER PRICE, 1 YEAR (13 ISSUES)

☐ UK: £41.60 (Save 20%) ☐ Europe: £60.00 ☐ World: £70.00

Cheque

☐ I enclose a cheque for £ _____
(made payable to Imagine Publishing Ltd)

Credit/Debit Card

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Amex ☐ Maestro

Card number _____ Expiry date _____

Security number ☐☐☐ (last three digits on the strip at the back of the card)

Issue number ☐☐ (if Maestro)

Signed _____

Date _____

Code: PAD002 PS3002

☐ Tick this box if you do not wish to receive any promotional material from Imagine Publishing Ltd ☐ Tick this box if you do not wish to receive promotional material from other companies. Terms & Conditions apply. We publish 13 issues a year, your subscription will start from the next available issue unless otherwise indicated. Direct Debit guarantee details available on request. This offer expires without notice.

I would like my subscription to start from issue: ☐☐☐

Return this order form to:

Next3 Subscriptions Department, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU or email it to next3subs@imagine-publishing.co.uk

You will be able to view your subscription details online at www.imagineSubs.co.uk

next hype

PS3 Publisher: Ubisoft Developer: Ubisoft Montreal Genre: Stealth/Sandbox Players: 1
Website: www.assassinscreed.com Release Date: Q1 2007

ASSASSIN'S CREED

Assassin's Creed

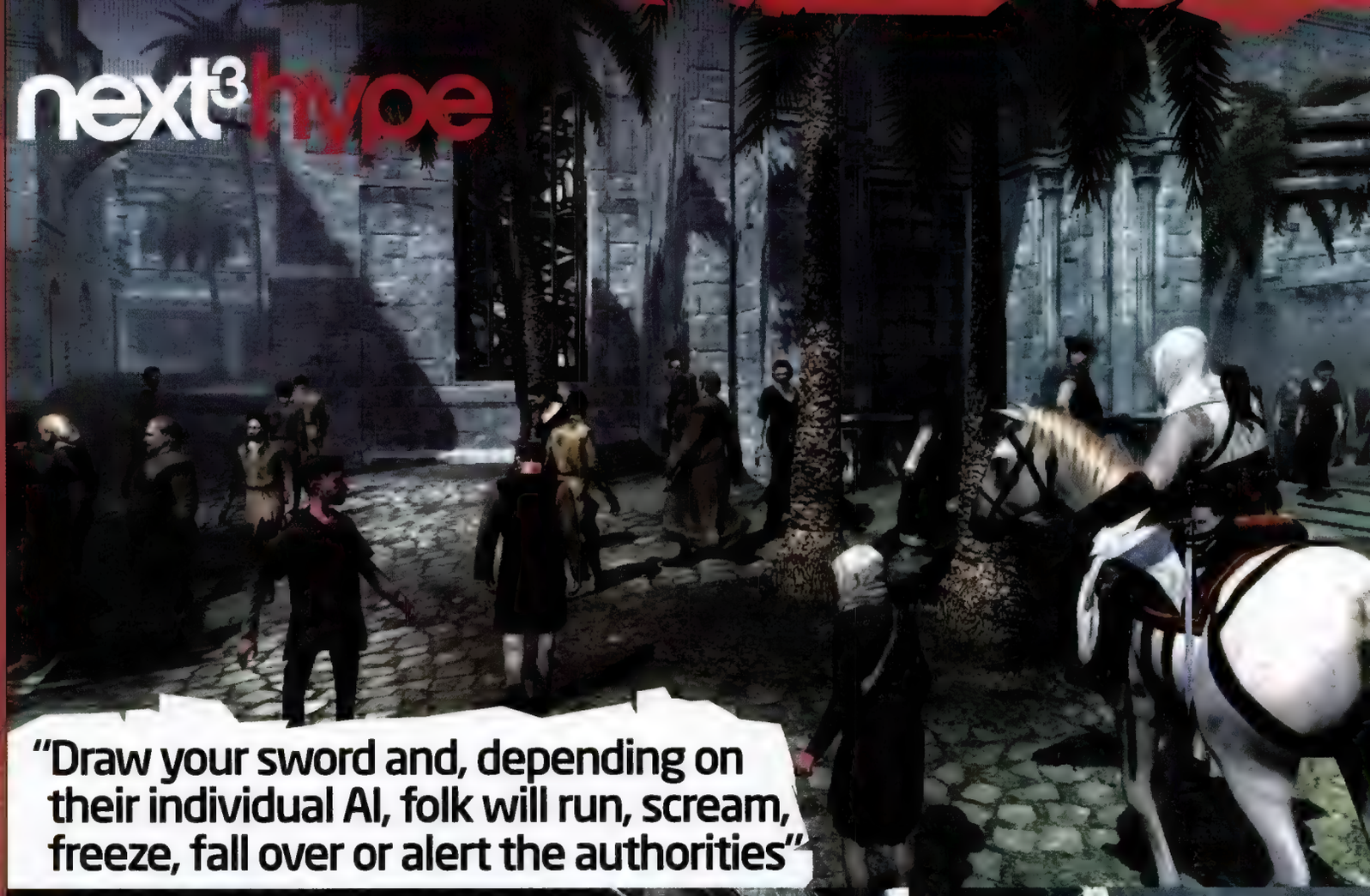
Could this be the very first truly next-gen title? Either way, it will make a killing

"NOTHING IS TRUE, everything is permitted" – the last words of Hassan-i-Sabbah, founder of the brotherhood of the assassin. Uttered on his death bed, the phrase now being bandied about in just about every preview of Ubisoft's upcoming genre-smasher of a game once had a meaning beyond the casual throwaway marketing soundbyte or strapline. It's about mastery of the human soul. It's about leveraging your influence with others. It's about pure, total dominance. In a word, it's about power. Indeed, if one were to think about the proper meaning of the axiom, before the befuddlement of translation and age come into play: Nothing is forbidden, everything is permitted, the saying takes on a wholly different meaning – something a good deal more sinister. Sabbah – also known in history as the old man of the mountains – was, by many accounts, something of a maniac, despite being a devoted theologian and a remarkably intelligent leader. *Assassin's Creed*, an original IP from the folks responsible for the *Prince Of Persia* series, is all about the power of the assassin at the height of their influence, around a hundred years after their founding.

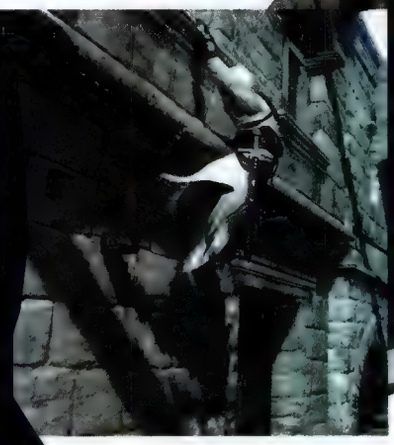
The brotherhood of the assassin didn't, however, spring forth from just anywhere. Hassan-i-Sabbah, seeking to gain substantial political power in accordance to a Shiah doctrine, used a number of horribly effective persuasion techniques to bolster the ranks of his army of silent killers. Many of these practices involved large amounts of young women (or, as he called them, his houris – a bold inflammatory statement to the rest of the Muslim community) and extended licking sessions – we'll say no more. Sex has, does, and always will sell, we suppose. By the middle of the 11th Century Hassan-i-Sabbah had managed to build himself the most terrifyingly loyal army the world had ever seen, often sending his disciples to their doom on a whim, or to display his power over others to visitors. Finally expiring around 1124 AD, Hassan had managed to build, with cunning, charm and strategic murder, a clan of considerable power that still survives today, albeit as a scattered following, as the Nizar sect, currently headed by the 49th Imam, His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV – not a guy, we imagine, you'd want to piss off.

Perhaps what's been recently branded as the Assassin's Creed – this adage that nothing is true, everything is permitted – does have some relevance though. Perhaps it's most appropriate when used to talk about what Ubisoft's Montreal studio set out to do with what looks to be one of the best games in history. Nothing is true: forget the rules that have been set down with the previous generation. Everything is permitted: allow the player the freedom to do anything they want. Anything. Yes, that does seem entirely appropriate of a game that put everything else to shame at E3. *Assassin's Creed* is certainly a special game, and one that's doing things we've been anticipating for some time.

So what about these assassins then, what the hell were they all about? During this particular period of history, namely the Third Crusade, the Hashshashin, as they were then known, didn't take sides, and murdered many prominent figures on both sides of the conflict. The problem for these stone cold killers was that while Richard The Lionheart and the Muslim leader Saladin



"Draw your sword and, depending on their individual AI, folk will run, scream, freeze, fall over or alert the authorities"



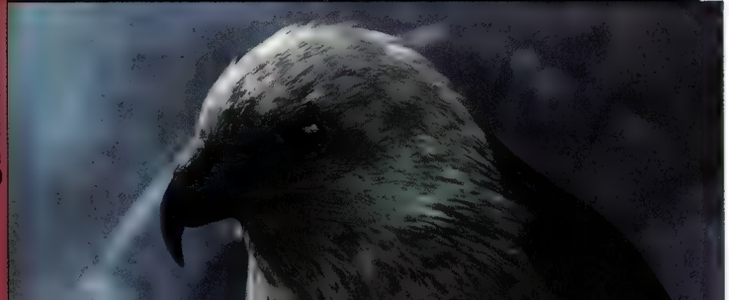
All you people. You're like ants to me... ants!

A bird in the hand

Altair: Half man, half bird

ALTAIR Altair's affiliation with the eagle is a key part of both gameplay and character design. Check out that little peak on his hood, and the way that when he performs more acrobatic moves his robe mirrors the movement of a majestic bird of prey. The fact that every frame of animation has been carefully drawn by hand, with numerous flourishes and additions to help bring the metaphor to life, is testament to Ubisoft Montreal's painstaking commitment to detail. Watching the trailer with this knowledge gives you insight into all manner of hints about Altair's link with the eagle. The way he drops from a height onto an unsuspecting guard, or leaps at his prey, going straight for the neck. Running across the rooftops and perching himself on precarious ledge like a killer bird-man is another clue to the influence that Ubisoft has taken from the ornithological world.

EAGLES The most popular 'crest' animal, the eagle, features in numerous shields, emblems and flags, the eagle has been included in many nations' national symbols such as Egypt, the Roman Empire, Russia, Germany, Austria, the US, and Spain. Often seen as sacred, the eagle's feathers are used in numerous religious practices around the world - most notably by native Americans who have laws allowing them to procure feathers for spiritual or religious use. While the Harpy Eagle is considered the largest of the species in terms of bulk, the Haring Ibon Eagle has recently been proved the most sizable in terms of height and overall massiveness. Three interesting eagle facts there. It's true what they say, you really do learn something new every day.



CONTINUATION //

were both righteous and just folk, while they were off bashing each other over the head in various parts of the holy lands, the rest of the area was put under the control of leaders of slightly less repute, giving the Hashshashin every reason to slaughter said despots in the name of justice. While they weren't exactly balanced during this holy war – their main aim at the time to slaughter Saladin – there was certainly no alliance or affiliation of any kind with the crusaders. The men themselves were recruited from the young men that 'seemed apt to murder' – young men without families, street children and the like. These recruits, according to many historical reports, were drugged with Hashish (hence – some say – the name) and indoctrinated into the ways of the assassin, learning to see the then leader Sinan as more of a deity than a man. With the range of programming tools developed over the course of the previous hundred years of the Hashshashin, each and every devotee was prepared to offer up everything to their cause.

Altair, the lead in this medieval murder-'em-up is one of these Hashshashin, the greatest of the time to be precise, but after a failure to dispatch the leader of the Knights Templar, Robert de Sable, he's busted down from the top rung of the ladder right to the bottom, the rank of Uninitiated. Despite being historically inaccurate (the Hashshashin would often kill themselves after a successful attack, and would certainly have offed themselves if they'd failed an assassination), this gives a handy little backdrop to the game, not only allowing us to chart Altair's fall and rise, but also to empathise with the young

A brief history of The Crusades

200 years in five minutes

FACTS FOR THE MEMORIES Read five different textbooks about the crusades and you'll more than likely get five completely conflicting sets of dates and facts - even the number of crusades is a matter for debate, ranging from eight to over 20, depending on who you listen to. War is rarely an easy thing to document with any efficiency though, and ones that occurred around a thousand years ago are always going to be subject to varying interpretations. It's probably fair to say however, that the groundwork for the Crusades was laid down with the 4th Century theological giant, St Augustine of Hippo who, against the wholly pacifist Christian doctrine at the time said that killing in the name of God was actually okay. The concept of a 'Just War' was unveiled to the Christian masses, and given the rising power of other religions and marauding intruders, they lapped it up.

FIRST AND FOREMOST The real catalyst for the First Crusade however, was a rapidly growing Islam that had managed to get as far as central France before being checked and pushed back. A crazy Egyptian, Caliph Al-Hakim, really put the wind up the Christians by persecuting both them and the Jews, causing many Christians to convert to Islam and the persecuted to beg for help from the then Pope Urban II in 1095. Cue almost two hundred years of petty religious squabbling and the pretty much constant change of territorial control of the major holy cities.

WHY BOTHER? Ultimately the Crusaders failed in their task for many reasons, and in all sense should never have bothered. There was infighting between the various countries involved, no central command, disillusionment with the cause, disease and any number of lesser reasons that meant that a protracted conflict at such a distance such as this one could never have been won by the crusaders.

Walk around normally and you won't arouse suspicion.

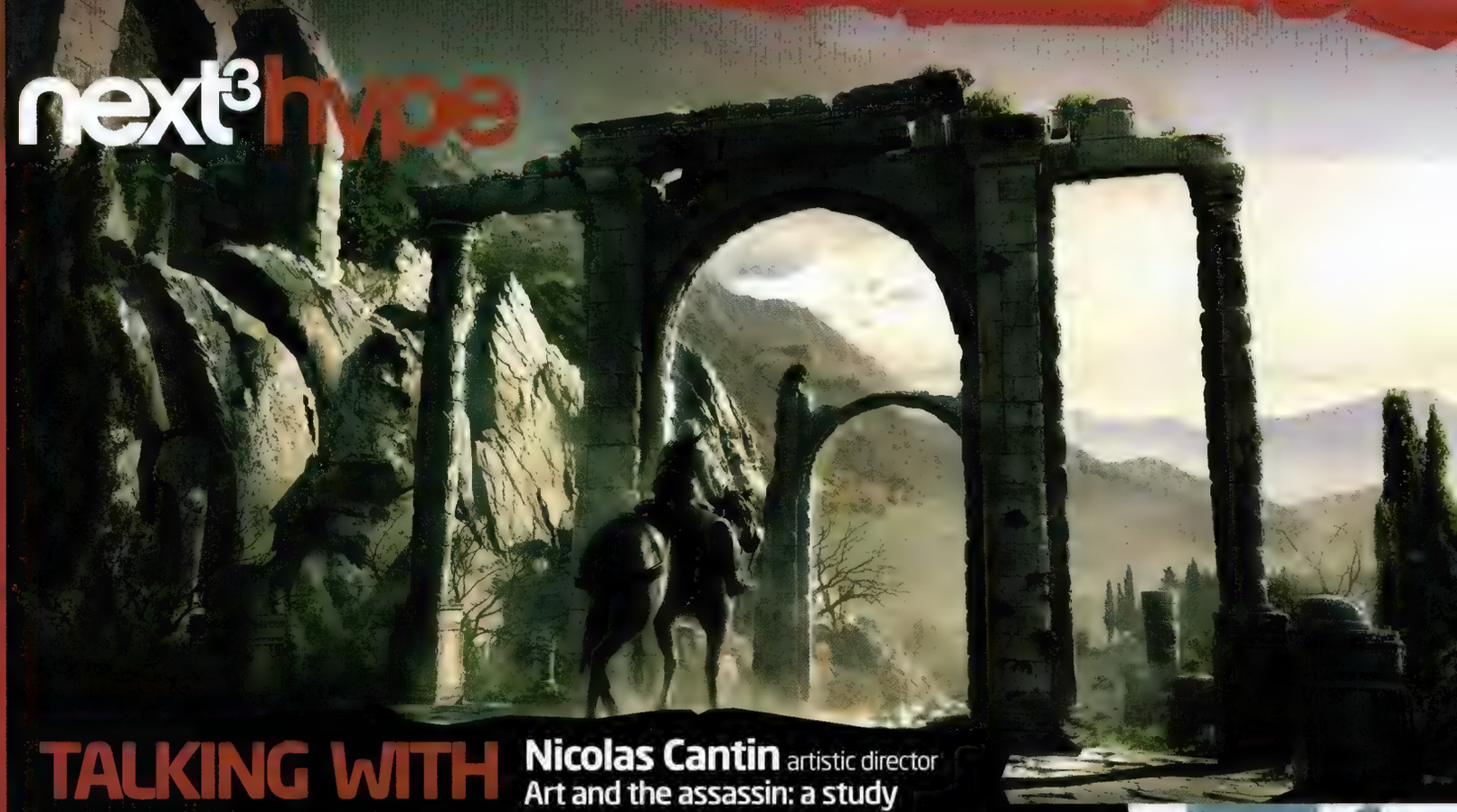
It's easy to see how Altair could be confused with a cleric

ABOUT ASSASSIN'S CREED: NOT EVERYTHING IS AS IT SEEMS, THERE'S MUCH, MUCH MORE TO THE STORY

man as he changes from an experienced, self-assured and egotistical assassin at the top of the brotherhood's food chain to a soft spoken, pensive member of the secret society. Over the course of the game we see Altair relearn the lessons he forgot while at the top of the assassin game. Of course, following his demotion and humiliation, the other assassins in the brotherhood will be looking to push, haze and test him, more so than they would any other initiate. This relegation does have its advantages however, as the over-confident, cocky Altair we see at the start of the game isn't necessarily the best assassin he can be, and with his new-found introspection comes a whole bunch of assassin-friendly skills.

What about those skills then? What makes Altair any better than any other nine-fingered throat slitter? Have a butcher's at the screenshots dotted about the screen, check out his outfit. That little peak at the front of his hood. What does it remind you of? Any of you familiar with Arabic will have also noticed the implications, and for those who've seen the trailer the metaphor will be inescapable. Altair, who's full name translates to 'son of none' also means 'The Flyer' (from the phrase 'The flying eagle'). From this, you can probably surmise that his greatest talent lies in his agility and ability to enter and exit areas in manners not often used by humans. Indeed, it's quite remarkable exactly how manoeuvrable our man Altair is.

While the control system is about as simple as you're likely to see on PS3, the joy comes from the recreation of realism and the genuine feeling of being caught up in a throng of bystanders. After your mark has been erased, the real benefits of all that acrobatic training become clear. Rarely are you given a clean kill, as you're often forced to make your move in full view of numerous witnesses, making a swift getaway essential if you don't want to get caught up in a dangerous rumble with a bunch of angry crusaders, Muslims or thugs. While the acrobatic element is a sizable feature of the gameplay, as was the case with Ubisoft Montreal's previous third-person series, *Prince Of Persia*, there's an entirely different mechanic present in *Assassin's Creed:* what the developer is calling 'social stealth'. This involves making the bustling crowd work for, rather than against you. The most obvious example, and the easiest to explain in terms of videogames, is the NPC group system. Fulfill side-quests for certain factions within the game



TALKING WITH Nicolas Cantin artistic director

Art and the assassin: a study

How would you describe the artistic direction on the game?
Even though the action takes place in The Holy Land during the Third Crusade, we really want the game to have very modern and cutting-edge visuals. Our visual signature aspires to be in line with the emotional experience that the player will live instead of concentrating on portraying a specific setting. Of course, each city will be faithfully recreated, each with its own architectural and cultural style. But our focus is to give each location a visual treatment that will represent the emotional experience the player will undergo.

How did you manage that?
To achieve such a result, we used a lot of post-production visual effects very similar to those used by the movie industry. Indeed, *Assassin Creed's* art direction and visual effects have been highly influenced by films, especially for post effects and filters inspired by movies ranging from *Man On Fire* to *Black Hawk Down* and *The Butterfly Effect*. This was not possible on the previous generation of consoles. At the end of the day, the look of the game will be very different from the classic CG affects videogames often use.

PS3 enables the creation of epic environments in terms of both size and content. How have you taken advantage of this in *Assassin's Creed*?
One of the reasons we set the game in The Holy Land instead of just picking a single city is because we wanted to use the graphical potential of the next-generation consoles to show off some breathtaking vistas. The setting is the Third Crusade and the land has been ravaged by medieval warfare, but there will still be some moments of pure joy when riding your horse out into the open terrain to find hidden pockets of untouched beauty.

The city we saw in the E3 demonstration of *Assassin's Creed* was a very beautiful city in terms of design and art direction. How have you achieved such results?
We did a lot of research on the city of Acre presented in the E3 demo. We discovered that during the Crusades, it changed sides many times between Christians and Muslims, and that is what makes this city so diverse in terms of architecture and design. In 1191 there were many structures which acted primarily for defence and others which were downright destroyed from the frequent assaults. The city had been under siege by the knights and soldiers for almost three years.

As explained before, we have added a cold blue filter to give this city a more modern look and its own unique personality (post war atmosphere). Each city within *Assassin's Creed* will have its own filter so that the player will be able to tell them apart in a glimpse of an eye.

Combat situations like this will probably end with your death.

Combat situations like this however, are much better.

Altair-ed beast

The many forms of Altair

The name Altair is derived from the Greek meaning star. It's a small etymological leap from that to the Arabic version, meaning, at its base, bird. If you're thinking of naming your child (it's a unisex moniker, by the way) Altair, we suggest you think again as, from our Internet scouring, it rated among the least liked names on a wide range of baby-naming websites. The fact that Altair is the twelfth brightest star in our night sky doesn't seem to have made it any more appealing. Maybe that's because astrology often labels the star bad luck - something to do with a plague of snakes or something.

CONTINUATION //

world and they'll aid you in your efforts to escape or get close to your mark. This works the other way as well: antagonise a particular sect within the city and they'll make sure you suffer for it at a later date, whether it's making your escape route that much more difficult or going the whole hog and attempting to beat you senseless, you'll feel the repercussions sooner or later.

This wouldn't really matter if the standard conventions of videogames held true, they are, after all, just a pesky crowd, and when has a crowd ever affected anything in a videogame? The trouble is, though, that like many aspects of this particular next-gen title, the tenets of current-generation gaming simply don't apply any more. Movement is no longer a simple matter of pointing in one direction and attempting to outrun the goons chasing you. Run into a bunch of unfriendly merchants and while it may be possible to vault them, leap up the side of a wall or bundle your way through, you'll more than likely end up being surrounded and cut down – a tough crowd, that's for sure. That's not the limit of the NPCs' influence, not by a long shot.

ABOUT ASSASSIN'S CREED: EVERY ACTION HAS A CORRESPONDING REACTION IN THE GAME WORLD

Behave strangely in the game world and NPCs will look at you funny, drawing unwanted attention toward you. Draw your sword and, depending on their individual AI, folk will run, scream, freeze, fall over or alert the authorities; shove people around too fiercely and you'll attract more interest than it's healthy for an assassin to have; and hang around in inappropriate places and you'll be reported to the local constabulary quicker than you can say 'It weren't me, guv'. No, the best way to move around is without commotion, which means behaving in the game world as you'd behave in real life (should you ever find yourself in the time of the Third Crusade), not something we've ever been forced to do. Sure, titles like *Hitman* have come close, but there you're following virtual rules, with *Assassin's Creed* you already know the rules, you don't have to test how close you have to be to an enemy before he sees you and comes charging toward you like an enraged bull.

It's this kind of possibility that marks out truly next-gen titles. This level of realism isn't something that can be implemented with the click of fingers. It's offered solely by the expansiveness and freedom delivered by the power of the PlayStation 3 and the meticulous programming of a development studio dedicated to creating a more interactive world than you've ever seen before. So, we have a crowd that responds realistically and, with the individual AI, unexpectedly. Quite a feat, but not exactly something that's likely to win any awards on its own. Adding to the social stealth element, classic stealth is, of course, present and the ability to disappear is an essential skill when your job consists of murdering prominent military and political leaders. While we're all gushing about this newfangled crowd feature, it's easy to forget the advances made by Ubisoft in other areas such as the interactivity of the environments. Rather than individually creating sections of wall or roof that can be used to climb on, leap up and grab hold of, a handy programming tool has allowed Ubisoft to make sure that any ledge or area that would give purchase in the real world has the same properties in *Assassin's Creed*. Based around the sport of free running, Ubisoft has quite successfully created a 'complete' climbing experience, bolstered by a momentum system that means that bolting like a horse after a kill won't necessarily make things any easier for you.

Try barging your way through a throng of Saturday shoppers in your high street. Okay, it's fun butting toddler, mother and chav aside, but not only is it very difficult, you're also more than likely to go arse over tit – something that's been transferred to this virtual world tremendously well. Everything can be going swimmingly – you've approached your target with the minimum of fuss, slipped him a lengtn of cold hard steel to the neck, and are off on your merry way back to your hideout to exchange assassination anecdotes when you push it a little too hard as you're skipping across rooftops and take a spill, allowing the pursuing guards to make ground on you, starting the kind of four-on-one confrontation you could really do without. Not that you're completely defenseless in a more up front fight, but with the all-encompassing realism, you're not going to be surviving a long sword

Altair's wrist mounted spring blade is his best weapon.

Altair often finds himself at the top of churches and the like.

Showing off

Will Altair be making his way to your TV any time soon?

While the patenting of videogame ideas isn't necessarily indicative of anything at all, Ubisoft looks to be expanding its horizons with the protection of its brand new IP across both film and TV. Let's hope it doesn't wind up as a low-budget syndication starring Adrian Paul (that cheesy actor from *The Highlander* TV series). The patent itself offers protection for "Entertainment services, namely television action series and the production of motion pictures". An *Assassin's Creed* movie, eh? Let's hope Uwe Boll doesn't catch wind of it.

Skillz

Altair has all the moves

We've been rambling on about Altair's climbing abilities, which are based on the French sport of Parkour or Free Running as we call it over here, but he has a whole bunch of other skills like his heightened eagle-eyed vision which can be used to pick out targets. Going into this 'vision' mode shows not only your intended mark, but also puts a haze around your friends and enemies within sight, making it easier to work out approaches and escape routes. As you progress through the game, you're able to use increasingly impressive offensive and defensive manoeuvres with your assassinations as well.

CONTINUATION//

to the neck in traditional videogame fashion. Facing off against a single opponent isn't too much trouble for our man Altair, being an accomplished swordsman, but when the odds stack up against the assassin his confidence drops, making it more difficult to defend against the various strikes aimed at him. The combat is far more reliant upon taking advantage of your opponents' attacks, dodging, counterattacking and evading than all-out aggression. It's fluid, graceful and overwhelmingly beautiful when Altair manages to dispatch a small troop of crusaders with the kind of style and finesse we've only seen before in *The Matrix* films.

So *Assassin's Creed* houses the most complex AI system we've ever seen, an impressive combat system, an equally astounding manoeuvring mechanic including an approach to momentum that has a huge impact on the way you play the game, as well as lead character loaded with personality and a potentially great storyline based in real history. It needs little more to make it a truly groundbreaking game. The trouble is that you could be forgiven for thinking that this is the kind of rhetoric built around a title by passionate writers, fuelled by over-enthusiastic PRs and generous marketing budgets. Granted, this kind of fervour is not uncommon among new IPs – especially on a new console – but we've seen it being demoed and we can safely say that there's not an ounce of exaggeration anywhere in this preview. In fact we haven't even mentioned the fact that *Assassin's Creed* is a fully free-roaming game spread

Almost every part of the environment is traversable.

ABOUT ASSASSIN'S CREED: MUCH MYSTERY SURROUNDS THE GAME'S RUMOURED TIME-TRAVEL THEME

More than meets the eye

The story behind the story behind the story

We haven't given you the full story here, and if you're the kind of gamer who enjoys a few surprises, we'd recommend you stop reading this bit right about... now. There's a much deeper storyline to be found here, and as the narrative unfolds Altair will find that The Crusades are just a cover for a much bigger conflict. What's that much more intriguing however, is what happens when you fail your task in the game world. After your demise, the screen fades to black and you're treated to the message 'System Offline'. Is this something to do with virtual time travelling? Are you somehow being sent back to change history? Is this some kind of recreational activity? We're not sure, and the only thing that Ubisoft has let slip is that it has something to do with genetic memory, whatever that is. Early trailers for the game hinted at something similar with occasional interference flickers and one demo ending with a guy removing some kind of virtual reality helmet. This opens up all manner of options for the inevitable sequel, hooray.

If you're not completely surrounded it's worth bolting.

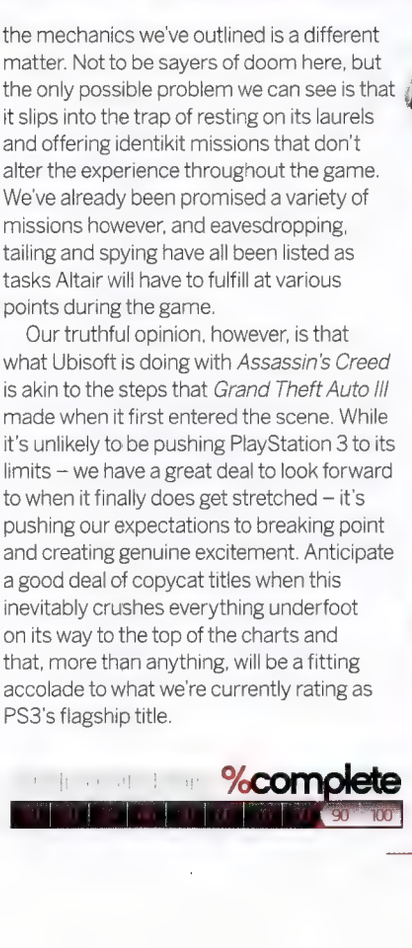
over the three cities of Jerusalem, Damascus and the port city of Acre. Purposefully arranged thus to make the most of PS3's graphical power, the sheer scale of the game is enough to strike any gamer dumb, and the breathtaking vistas you see while galloping from one city to another on horseback are genuinely awe inspiring.

The cities themselves have distinct districts ranging from the poorer ghettos to high-class areas, and are further sub divided into merchant areas, religious zone, squares, souks and plazas. Muddling up this mix even further is the volatile mix of sects present in each city. Christians, Jews and Muslims inhabit each of the three metropolises, giving you a great range of friends – and enemies – to make, and creating a complex network of affiliations that will directly affect the way you go about your business of killing.

We're not going to go into the options given to you when thinking about your kills, as that would belittle the scope you're given when considering how to go about the assassinations. Suffice it to say that you'd scarcely have more options in the real world should you feel the need to knock off a military despot. You are given a range of rewards for your actions however, often giving you more options for your next kill.

Crossbows offer ranged attacks, a horse will not only give you speedier routes between and around the cities, but will also allow you to reach higher ledges, rooftops and windows, and Altair's deadly wrist-fixed knife, for which he trades a finger, is a clever tool that allows for pretty much instant kills. Yes, be sure that *Assassin's Creed* is pretty far from linear, and with the huge expanse of territory, sandbox gameplay and character building, an absence of any kind of multi-player aspect seems insignificant. You're given missions by your brotherhood, but when, where and how you do it is completely up to you. You might even want to toddle off to some holy beauty spot and focus your chi before a job, you may prefer to make life easier by getting chummy with a faction within the city first or you could just head straight for the kill. The gameplay is undoubtedly the most revolutionary we've seen for a long time. Comparisons with *Hitman*, *Shadow Of The Colossus*, *Splinter Cell* and *Prince Of Persia* might seem fair given Ubisoft's involvement with the latter two titles, but this really is something else, something indefinable by the standards of current-generation gaming, and far beyond anything on Xbox 360 thus far. Whether the game develops and manages to expand on the mechanics we've outlined is a different matter. Not to be sayers of doom here, but the only possible problem we can see is that it slips into the trap of resting on its laurels and offering identikit missions that don't alter the experience throughout the game. We've already been promised a variety of missions however, and eavesdropping, tailing and spying have all been listed as tasks Altair will have to fulfill at various points during the game.

Our truthful opinion, however, is that what Ubisoft is doing with *Assassin's Creed* is akin to the steps that *Grand Theft Auto III* made when it first entered the scene. While it's unlikely to be pushing PlayStation 3 to its limits – we have a great deal to look forward to when it finally does get stretched – it's pushing our expectations to breaking point and creating genuine excitement. Anticipate a good deal of copycat titles when this inevitably crushes everything underfoot on its way to the top of the charts and that, more than anything, will be a fitting accolade to what we're currently rating as PS3's flagship title.



%complete

90 100

PS3 Publisher//Sega Developer//AM2 Genre//Beat-'em-up Players//1-2 Website//virtuafighter.jp Release date//Spring 2007

Round five, fight!

Virtua Fighter 5

IN A WORD: balance. In more words, *Virtua Fighter* is about getting as close to perfect balance as is humanly possible. That flawless equality has defined Sega's beat-'em-up series in a genre that has strived and struggled for balance. For a fighting game to be interesting, it has to give varied characters different moves. For a fighting game to remain fair, it has to remain balanced and ensure the variety of moves somehow work out equal, that every character has a fair chance of winning. Somehow is the key word. It's a near impossible task and when beat-'em-ups have been kicking around for years at high-level play in arcades, some characters naturally emerge as more powerful as players abuse the same moves over and over again.

Yet somehow, *Virtua Fighter* has resisted this and combined balance with variety. God only knows how. Well, God and Sega. But Sega isn't telling and God never replies to his emails, so the formula will remain a secret. Jeffry can beat Vanessa who can beat Kage who can beat Akira who can beat Jacky who can beat Jeffry. Master any character and you can beat anyone in a straight-up fight, best of five, Japanese-tournament style. *Virtua Fighter* is balance.

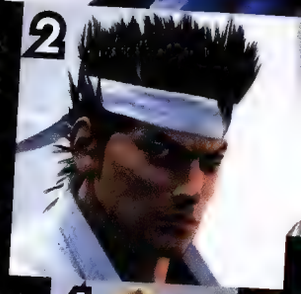
That is, of course, providing you forget about *Virtua Fighter 4: Evo*. While returning faces from *Virtua Fighter 4* adhered to the balanced ethos of the series, new boys Goh and Brad were weaker than the old hands. Hoodie-donning chav Goh was too slow and didn't have any damaging combos he could call upon, while Brad suffered from a lack of low attacks, watering down his attacking options. *Virtua Fighter 4: Final Tuned*, a release that only saw light of day in Japanese arcades, tried to beef up the new boys but Goh and Brad lacked a killer edge. In *Virtua Fighter 5*, both will be brought up to speed and better than that; to make up for his lacklustre showing in *Virtua Fighter 4: Evo*, Sega has decked out Goh in the pimpest black trenchcoat you'll ever see. It's similar to the one worn by Keanu Reeves in *The Matrix*, but it looks

The PS3 version will look even better than the arcade.

Tiers

Who was the best in this balanced fighter?

Tiers is a dirty word in the *Virtua Fighter* world. Ask any *Virtua Fighter* fan what the tiers are, or who the best character is, and you'll likely be ignored or mocked. Nevertheless, in *Virtua Fighter 4: Final Tuned*, it could be argued that Kage (1) has a slight advantage over the rest of the cast, thanks to him having more attacking options available. Beyond that? You could argue a case for any of the others, with Akira (2), Jacky (3) and Sarah (4) likely to pop up in a discussion on other powerful characters, but it was far easier to decide who was at the bottom – Wolf (5), Jeffry (6) and Brad (7), with Goh (8) behind them. Poor Goh. Still, the throw-heavy characters benefit from a zero frame throw in *Virtua Fighter 5*, where guaranteed throws no longer have start-up frames, adding more beef to grappling characters such as Jeffry and Goh. Enough to compete with Kage? We shall see.



Again, arenas are both open and of the caged variety.

CONTINUATION //

infinitely cooler slung around the shoulders of a judo assassin than it does a wooden-faced stoner. As far as apologies go for making Goh rubbish in *Virtua Fighter 4: Evo*, it's a pretty good one.

Introducing new faces into a finely tuned cast is always tricky and it's for that reason that *Virtua Fighter 5* has already bounced into Japanese arcades for location tests. Why? Partly to drum up excitement, mostly so last minute changes can be made to keep the characters balanced. This is especially important given there are two new faces introduced to the mix for this full sequel and Sega needs player feedback to see if they're overpowered or perfectly balanced. As things stand, it's probably a good job too – *Soul Calibur III* went straight to console without location testing or any arcade presence and suffered from horrendous balance and game-breaking glitches. Even then, location testing only helps that rather than eradicating the problem of badly balanced characters. *Tekken 5* jumped through the location test hoops and still emerged with Steve, Bryan and Nina weeing all over the rest of their cast, flexing their overpowered muscles.

So how will Sega ensure the new faces slot in well with the established cast? There's no guarantee they will but kudos to Sega for making them interesting. New girl Eileen is a practitioner of monkey kung-fu, which roughly means quick darting movements, lots of low and mid attack mix-ups and she has hair a bit like a monkey, that looks strangely sexy for reasons we don't quite understand. She plays a lot like Lion, using her speed to crack open an opponent's defense. While her throws remain an unknown quantity, she does have one throw where she jumps on her opponent's shoulders, punches them in the face a few times, then flips back off their shoulders, pushing them to the ground. We have no idea how good that description makes the move sound but trust us, it's brilliant.

Over in the blue corner is luchador libre El Blaze. The dinky fighter has a terrible voice, delivering lines such as "take that" with all the enthusiasm of a toilet cleaner who's lost his sponge and has to use his hands. Nevertheless, once the fight starts and El Blaze shuts up, his luchador fighting style takes over and it looks incredibly cool. His fighting style seems to be based around lots of kick mix-ups, scaring the opponent into guessing a direction to block. When they block in fear, El Blaze can then choose from his various throws – from sunset flips and hurricanes. When

Utter, utter rubbish, yet utter, utter brilliance at the same time – only Sega could pull that off

El Blaze Vs Wolf – awesome wrestling moves ahoy!

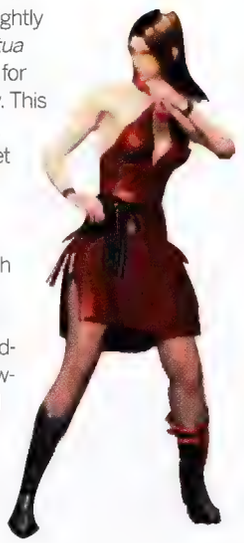
the opponent is down, El Blaze has further flips to inflict more damage. In short, he looks like a pocket dynamo and has proved more popular than Eileen in Japanese location tests. Then he wins and starts talking in that really dry, unenthusiastic monotone drawl, wasting all that time and effort he spent trying to impress you. "I am the ultimate." He's probably only popular because the Japanese haven't got a clue what he's saying.

The fact that the Japanese have plumped for El Blaze over Eileen is worrying, as the young monkey-haired Chinese girl has failed to win over Japanese players. Whether this is due to her being relatively weak is nothing more than a lazy conspiracy theory right now, as it could simply be that the Japanese don't find her character appealing (Goh proved immensely popular despite being the weakest character in *Evo*). It should also be pointed out that wrestling is huge in Japan, so it makes sense that El Blaze is so popular. Still, this is a preview, it's our job to moan and be cynical and the cold shoulder Eileen's been getting is a worry.

The old characters cheer us up again, thanks to a sloppy next-gen lick of approval. Shun Di laughs before waving his arms about Steven Seagal style and looking deadly serious. Lau coughs before he fights and has a deathly pallor, to fit with his storyline. Aoi waves her arms about and says something in Japanese before assuming her fighting pose. Kage has a new stance, Lion has a bizarre Canadian accent and Vanessa has been turned into the sexiest character ever.

While they look better than they ever did and have had their personalities enhanced, there's no telling how they will play in the final retail version. At the moment, the Japanese players are sticking to tried and tested strategies from *Virtua Fighter 4: Final Tuned* and that seems to be paying off – Pai still has her swallow kicks, stagger throws and upward palms launcher. As for the gameplay itself, the pace is slightly slower and more deliberate than *Virtua Fighter 4*, a game that wasn't known for playing things fast and loose anyway. This makes the fighting even more tense, as there's more time for players to set up their offence and mix-ups.

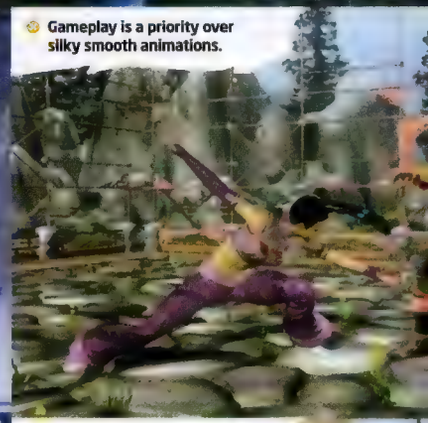
"What are these... this mix-ups?" you ponder to yourself in confusion. Well, we reply in a manner that is both informative and terrifying because we can read your thoughts, mix-ups are just that. Alternating between mid-attacks (have to be blocked high), low-attacks (have to be blocked low) and throws (don't get caught blocking) makes it tough for an opponent to defend effectively. With the pace



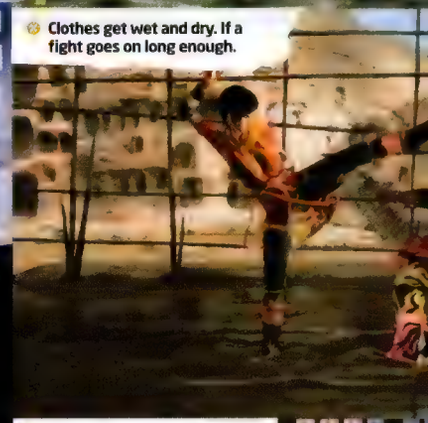
ABOUT VIRTUA FIGHTER 5: THE MOST BALANCED FIGHTER, IN ANY ARCADE, IN ANY CONSOLE

Eileen has hair a bit like a monkey – that's sexy for reasons we don't understand

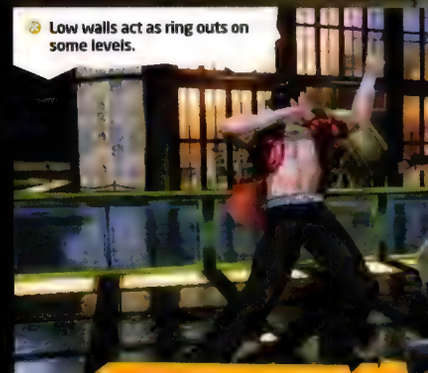
Virtua Fighter 5 online is an absolute non-starter.



Gameplay is a priority over silky smooth animations.



Clothes get wet and dry. If a fight goes on long enough.



Low walls act as ring outs on some levels.

Best Of The Best

National Tournaments Underway...

In Japan, they love fighting game tournaments and they love *Virtua Fighter*. The only surprise was that it took so long for the first one to appear. The snappily named Otenami Haiken 5 is the first tournament and will probably see a huge, huge number of Japanese players enter. The qualifiers will be held from now until the 29 October, with the grand finals on 4 November. Tournament results are the best way to judge how balanced a fighting game is by seeing what characters are the most successful afterwards. Will Chibita's Lion triumph? Can Nuki's Aoi nick her first ever win? Will the changes unsettle Itabashi Zangief's Shun Di? Whatever, we really hope an Akira player doesn't win. And no, we're not kidding.

Fighters can be customized á la *Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution*.

Arcade Sticks

Be like the experts! (minus the 'mad skillz')

If you want to play *Virtua Fighter* properly, you need an arcade stick. Absolutely, positively, unquestionably need one. Hori make the best sticks on the market and their Real Arcade Pro is top of the line, equipped with Sanwa buttons and a nice JLF stick. The only problem is they're heavy and bulky so if you want something lighter and cheaper to thrash around on, the Hori *Soul Calibur II* stick is old but does the job. The fact that most tournament players in the UK own either of the above sticks says all you need to know about their quality. If you want to mod an arcade stick yourself, most experts suggest picking up a Dreamcast arcade stick - they're cheap, lightweight and relatively easy to mod.

slowed down, there's more emphasis on this style of fighting, making fights even more brain-frying than *Virtua Fighter 4* as you try to absorb your opponent's style of play, patterns and preferred attacks and think of a plan to counteract. This will be the ultimate brain food for fighting fans who like their games to be about thought rather than flash.

The core gameplay has been freshened with new mechanics, so excuse the slight foray into technical speak that follows. Refloat launchers have been included now. Launchers are moves that knock the opponent up in the air for a combo; refloat launchers are moves that knock the opponent higher in the air to continue said combo. Reports from location tests say the timing for these combos is tight, so it's something only experts, show-offs and the bored will indulge in. Also new is the ability to attack and defend in a side-turned situation, when you can continue your attack. When certain attacks or throws leave you hip-first towards your opponent, your attacks will cause a blue hit effect signifying a side crumple. A side crumple means your opponent will double over and fall to the floor, leaving him defenseless and wide open for your combo of choice. This can be comboed into for massive damage. Properties of certain moves also change when side-turned, as some attacks suddenly float, new attack strings are opened up and so on.

Now for the obligatory paragraph about graphics. They look nice. Really nice. Thanks to the Lindbergh board, arcade hardware that can throw millions of polygons around while yawning and rubbing sleep out of its eyes, Sega has been able to sex up the graphics elsewhere. The backgrounds look stunning. Pai's stage, a mountain temple covered with a light shroud of mist, looks like the scenery at the end of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* minus the pretentious dialogue and man flying off into the clouds or whatever he did. There's nothing yet that matches the feeling when you first clapped eyes on Wolf's enclosed cage in *Virtua Fighter 4*, complete with a baying crowd watching the action, but the incidental details are almost as good – party-goers casually strolling around Sarah's stage, chatting and sipping overpriced Martinis. Graphics whores have nothing to worry about. Sega has catered for all your demands and needs.

That's the graphics done so hey, let's talk about sound too. We're sad to report that whatever Japanese loon was locked in a Sega studio with a distorted guitar for *Virtua Fighter 4*'s soundtrack has been given the boot. Instead, Sega has plumped for more authenticity and while refreshing, it's not an entirely successful experiment. There's the good (the Cantonese twangs of Lei Fei's temple), the bad (the Euro-trance of Sarah's night-time party) and the ugly (the porno slap-bass funk of Jeffry's beach hideout) with the ugly definitely muddying the good. When you add some dubious voice-acting to the mould – we're still angry at how lifeless El Blaze is – it's not the greatest aural mix you'll ever hear. Does it matter? Ultimately, no. *Virtua Fighter 5* will be the Girls Aloud of videogames as you'll be too busy looking to be offended by the monotone garbage coming out of their mouths. Still, it's a shame given how good *Virtua Fighter 4*'s soundtrack was. Bring back the crazy-haired Japanese loon! We liked him.

While we're talking about details irrelevant to the gameplay, it's also worth mentioning that *Virtua Fighter* has never, ever, ever been about the storyline but here's a Medal Of Try for Sega for trying anyway. The storyline is again focusing on Kage's attempts to stop the evil J6 corporation from cloning metal fighting machine Dural, who was made from his parts of his mother. Or something. Ignore all that anyway because while that's the main storyline, the sheer brilliance lies in fisherman Jeffry's sub-plot. He's been entering the previous *VF* tournaments to earn enough money to catch a shark that's been tormenting him but when he returns to Australia, there's no sign of the shark. He then learns the J6 has taken the shark, so he then enters the tournament to get the shark back because without the fishing battle against this legendary shark, Jeffry is nothing. Utter, utter rubbish yet utter, utter brilliance at the same time. Only Sega could pull something like that off. We'd ask God again but you know, the whole not replying to emails thing is still a problem.

The chances of *Virtua Fighter 5* flopping is on par with Chelsea failing to win the Premiership. There's no guarantee of success but you'll struggle to find anyone who believes this will achieve anything other than greatness. With its history, its stellar reputation and Sega at the helm, what else needs to be said? *Virtua Fighter* is balance. And really, that's all you ever need to know.

next[3]hype

Publisher EA **Developer** Valve **Genre** First person shooter **Players** 1-32 (online)
Release Date 01.2007 **Website** www.valvesoftware.com/games.html

1/2 X 6 = 1. Work that one out

Half-Life 2: Episode 2

SOME THINGS are so massive you never get the opportunity to truly appreciate them. Take the Earth, for example. Have you ever thought of just how many complex ecological systems are currently going through their motions at this very moment? Probably not. How many tectonic plates are shifting? How many hydrologic transactions, gaseous exchanges and geothermal interactions? The sheer magnitude and importance of it all is enough to render the entire thing unassailable to all but the most avid ecologists – something that just ain't right. If we look at it, perhaps marvel a little, and attempt to make sense of the things happening around us we may gain a better understanding of the world we live in. At the risk of getting all ecological on your collective asses, it's a more than valid point, and one that seems to be overlooked by pretty much everyone, even many of those involved in the trade of studying our green and plentiful planet.

The same applies to those things so very small, yet so very, very important to life on earth: insects, single cell organisms, bacteria, protons, neutrons and electrons. How often do you give them consideration? Given their value to our existence, probably not all that often either. Short of a few half-arsed years of lackadaisical study, very few of us appreciate, contemplate or understand as much of the world as we probably should. Discuss.

What in God's name does this have to do with *Half-Life 2* and the numerous extra goodies packaged into the disk? On the face of it very little, but take the time to think about the comparisons and you might find the analogy more appropriate than you initially thought. Either that or we're rambling inanely about a wholly unconnected issue just to irritate you lot. We'll let you decide.

Half-Life is simply enormous, there's no denying it. Whilst many console gamers may have missed the significance at the time of its initial release way back in November 1998 – being the particular preserve of PC gamers – the fact is that it seems have seeped into the collective videogame consciousness, quite rightly, as one of the best games of all time. That, if nothing else, displays the importance of *Half-Life*, and while it's undoubtedly a series of unparalleled innovation and quality have you ever stopped

ABOUT HALF-LIFE 2: BUCKETS OF VALVE'S TOP GAMES IN ONE FABULOUS COLLECTION

It's a series of unparalleled innovation and quality, but have you ever stopped to consider just what makes it so special?

WEAPONRY

Strongarm tactics

You don't understand the gravity of the situation

The gravity gun, much like this new fangled portal-creating weapon was one of the most interesting things to have happened to first-person shooters for some time. Increasing in strength throughout the game, the Zero-Point Energy Field Manipulator, otherwise known as the Gravity Gun, is a true joy to use, especially when you find a stash of rusty old band-saw blades to fling about. Buckets of paint are another favorite, covering enemies with their contents and making them look more than a little silly. For pure, unadulterated brutality, it has to be the radiator however.

Alyx and Dog - a formidable team that give you plenty of help against the combine.

The story so far...

Half empty or half full?

Opening with the original *Half-Life* in the Black Mesa research facility, New Mexico, we're first introduced to theoretical physicist, Gordon Freeman. After a routine experiment goes horribly wrong, creating a resonance cascade, hostile aliens - the Xen - come scuttling through the rift created by the failed experiment. Caught at various points between the aliens and the clean up team sent to mop up the mess, Freeman eventually winds up on the alien's home world, sent to destroy the creature keeping the space/time tear open. Having completed this task against all the odds, Gordon is saved by the mysterious G-man who somehow teleports him back to earth. Years later, after a lost war against an invading alien force, the Combine, Gordon is awakened from his stasis and sets about helping rebels free humans and vortigaunts (your enemy from the first game) alike from Combine control. Across the space of *Half-Life 2* and *Episode Two*, Gordon successfully takes down the enemy presence in the sprawling Combine-dominated Nova Prospekt, wrecking its central citadel before quitting the city with the help of Alyx and her robot Dog. What's next for *Episode Two* then? Given feedback on the first episode's settings, and judging from what we've seen, it looks like *Episode Two* delves deeper into the *Half-Life* world and offers some as yet unseen surroundings and enemies to the mix.

CONTINUATION //

to consider just exactly what makes it so special? Whilst it's fair to say that the storyline isn't particularly original in terms of the wider spectrum of the media – being inspired by Stephen King's *The Mist* and an episode of *The Outer Limits* entitled *The Borderland* – videogames have rarely seen such intricacy, character interaction and empathy for the leading man, Gordon Freeman, in their plotlines. The key, however, to *Half-Life* being truly special is in the method of the delivery. Gordon never speaks, the narrative never shows you any time outside the 'now', there are no cutscenes, and no instances where you see anything other than what Gordon sees, even in the most pivotal plot points – something that makes it almost impossible not to empathize with the puny hero. Indeed, it was Valve's priority that both Gordon's and the player's experiences are as analogous as possible. In an effort to reduce the loading times and keep that level of immersion high, levels were kept short, and much of the storyline was implicit, leaving the player to piece together what was going on from eavesdropping, visual clues and PA announcements. Further increasing both the realism and immersion was the facial animation of Alyx, your partner for a fair chunk of the series. Watching the terror and anxiety in her eyes as she comes to terms with the horrors you encounter is an experience not to be forgotten. All this isn't something you notice as you're playing, being one of those epiphanies that hits only after the fact, if at all, and it wasn't necessarily received well across the board, as many of the more Luddite gamers out there derided it for not giving players enough back story to really allow them to get into the *Half-Life* universe. It's a small price to pay, however, for an experience beyond compare in the genre.

Then there are other aspects of *Half-Life* that have become permanently ingrained in first-person shooters: crawling through vents, enemies that warn, berate and otherwise communicate with one another, a PA system often identifying Gordon as a target, the slow introduction of new and increasingly bizarre enemy types, and weapons and situations that take full advantage of the game engine. It's this assemblage of little things that combine to make the series both inviting and addictive, and the interest is only just beginning to rise with *Episode One* and *Episode Two* furthering the story and adding more novelty and differing intensities to the already varied mix. Two such new introductions to the franchise in *Episode Two* come in the form of 'Cinematic Physics' and a 'Soft Particle System', both enhancing the magnificence of the set pieces encountered on your journeys outside City 17, the setting for both *Half-Life 2* and *Episode One*.

So what's all this about these episodes then? Originally destined to be a standard sequel to *Half-Life 2*, and eschewing the regulation series of seemingly randomly timed follow ups, *Half-Life: Aftermath* has been repackaged and branded as an episode to ship smaller, but more regular installments. According to Valve we can be expecting regular chapters around six months apart, charting Gordon's ever more complex battle against the oppressive regime of the Combine. It's this approach to distribution that could well be the future of genres that can support it, FPSs being a prime example, so expect to be hearing the word 'episodic' in the world of videogames a lot from here on in. Much like many aspects of *Half-Life*'s gameplay, if this style of distribution takes off on the PS3, much like many aspects of contemporary gaming, we'll have Valve to thank for it. It's not as if the Washington-based development team haven't had enough accolades though, with over 80% of PC online action fun coming from one or other of their wealth of multi-player titles, and the *Half-Life* series itself having won over 50 Game Of The Year awards as well as a number of Best Ever Game trophies from across the industry.

So, with three of the *Half-Life* series included in the pack – one full game and two of these 'episodes' – you could be forgiven

Meeting these zombie headcrabs for the first time is something of a shock.

First-person puzzler?

Portal-based puzzling add-on

If you look, we've only covered five of the six titles so far in our preview, but we felt the final game, a single player FPS set in the *Half-Life* universe is more than special enough to warrant its own little section. All we've seen of the sixth title in the package is a trailer that displays some rather bizarre gameplay involving *Prey*-esque portals. Opening in a training area with a brief run-down of your weapon, the Aperture Science Handheld Portal Device, the trailer shows the kind of crazy adventures you can get up to with this weapon, which allows you to create rifts in space and travel through them to another point created by the gun. Whilst this has been done before, *to varying degrees, this is by far the most impressive new mechanic* we've seen for some time. "We wanted to take physics out of this domain as a tool that lets you bounce grenades around to how can we really change the game experience for our customers" enthused Valve co-founder Gabe Newell when talking about the mechanics of the handheld portal device. It wouldn't do justice to the game - which apparently starts a whole new story in the *Half-Life* world - to describe it, so why not have a butchers at the HD trailer at www.gametrailers.com/gamepage.php?fs=1&id=2804

ABOUT HALF-LIFE 2: TEAM FORTRESS 2 HAS BEEN IN DEVELOPMENT FOR OVER EIGHT YEARS

Half-Life 2 was celebrated for including helpful NPCs that didn't interfere with the game.

Drop your narbarculars

Where did portal come from?

The idea behind Valve's *Portal* was one originally conceived by the clever guys at Nuclear Monkey Software. Quite different to Valve's masterpiece, *Portal*, *Narbarcular Drop* sees you take control of Princess 'No-Knees" - named thus because of her inability to jump - as she's captured by a demon. Being subsequently dumped in prison, the Princess seeks to escape her imprisonment - as you would. To her advantage, the prison turns out to be a sentient being named Wally.

Wally's portal ability handily allows players to blast portals into any non-metallic environment, allowing them to jump in and out of rooms. One of the most innovative videogame mechanics in recent years, it's this place-shifting affair that forms the basis of *Portal*. If *Drop* is anything to go by, *Portal* should involve far more puzzling than any other FPS we've ever seen. Now under the employ of Valve the original *Drop* team is more than likely the driving force behind *Portal*.

CONTINUATION //

for thinking Valve had done enough to ensure its meteoric rise to the top of the charts, but – and the reason for this unprecedented generosity is beyond us – there are still another three titles to cover yet – let's hope we don't run out of space. Next up is *Counter-Strike: Source*, named after the Source engine used to create it (and, of course, *Half-Life 2*) – one of the most popular online shooters ever to grace the ether of the Internet. As simple in its gameplay as in its treatment of terrorism, *Source* is one of the most elegant shooters we've ever encountered and is pretty much guaranteed to be a hit with the online community. A few enhancements over the original *Counter-Strike* make this unlike other console iterations, most notably significantly improved graphics and physics as well as revamped, but ultimately identical maps to the original. There will undoubtedly be a number of PC gamers scoffing out there at what they see as the natural limitations of the controller as opposed to a keyboard and mouse, but the simple fact remains that *Counter-Strike*, in any of its forms, is a must-have title for anyone looking to spend any amount of time online. We're also guaranteed regular and extensive updates to the map, weapon and match type listings, making for an even greater value purchase. For those that haven't got online with this shooter, and even those who aren't particular fans of the first-person genre, we can't emphasize just how necessary it is to have sampled *Counter-Strike* in one of its numerous incarnations. Sure, it's been around for a fair while, but its almost constant presence as the most popular online shooter should be enough to draw a whole bunch of greens to the ranks of Terrorists and Counter Terrorists on the PS3.

You already know there's more, but with the inclusion of *Team Fortress 2*, you're getting over eight years of development packed onto one-sixth of a Blu-ray. Okay, it may not have had that amount of direct attention, but for a title that's been hiding down the back of the sofa for so long it's been hoovered out looking surprisingly tidy. With Valve's initial and key priority being to create "the best looking and best playing class-based multi-player game" you can be fairly sure that it's going to be another online favourite. For anyone that hasn't encountered *Team Fortress* before, the idea is a reasonably basic shooter, but rather than simply picking your weapon and armour loadouts, you take control of one of the many player classes, which include Heavy, Spy, Scout, Soldier, Pyro, Demoman, Engineer, Medic and Sniper. We've already made our choices, so there'll be minimal squabbling when code finally hits our desks. Unlike the more realistic approach taken by *Counter-Strike* and *Half-Life*, *Team Fortress* makes something of a departure from the norm and takes on a far more cartoony look than anything we've ever seen from the FPS gurus at Valve. The idea here is very much about fusing together a team of complementary characters and deathmatching your similarly built opposition's collective faces off. Obviously, with all these troop types and their relative strengths and weaknesses, *Team Fortress 2* is for the more tactically minded gamers out there. Originally conceived to be a free add-on to *Quake II*, it's amusing to note just how many times *Team Fortress*' direction has changed over the protracted development period. Even with the setbacks and pauses, however, we've got a sneaking suspicion that its mix of snazzy graphics and innate tactical elements may appeal to console gamers more than even the undisputed king of multi-player shooters, *Counter-Strike*.

The announcment from Valve top brass, Gabe Newell, that this embarrassment of first-person riches was coming to the PS3 came as something of a shock. Is it just a question of the next generation of consoles having enough grunt to deal with the kind of products Valve enjoys putting out, or does it signify a dedication, or at very least recognition of console gaming's increasing importance in the online realm? We suspect the latter if we're honest. With numerous business analysts predicting great things for the online games market, we suspect Valve – ever the forward thinker – is getting in on the act early with one of the most charitable collections we've ever seen. Does this signify the beginnings of a convergence with the PC market? Do we now have more reason to expect that those titles so closely guarded by the PC heads out there might drift on to our shores with greater regularity? In all honesty, it's difficult to say, but looking at Valve as an indicator of what's to come is never a bad bet. With *World Of Warcraft* also rumoured to be making the crossover at some point, this collection from Valve has led us to wondering how the relationship between PC and console games will develop. *Half-Life 2*'s appearance on the Xbox wasn't an amazing ambassador for PC-console gaming, as it was not only considerably behind the PC version, but also suffered from a fair few porting issues. This next-gen outing seems to be different in terms of commitment and importance however, being released at the same time as the PC iteration and enjoying the luxury of being ported by the developers themselves.

That said, if digital distribution doesn't turn out to be the easy, win-win situation that we've been promised by Sony, systems like Valve's very own Steam online distribution network could well eclipse the PS3's e-Distribution initiative. Hopefully some of you may have picked up on our opening analogy. Being lifelong console gamers, we haven't really appreciated *Half-Life* over the years, treating it as the ambit of the PC modding community. So we say look, take a step back and marvel at the still proud *Half-Life 2*, a title every bit as playable as it was two years ago. Once you've had a chance to marvel at one of the best games ever made, take a few steps closer and wonder at all those things that *Half-Life* did first; note how many times you've seen them in other games and give praise to a developer that had the imagination to further the genre that would hardly have moved otherwise.

next3 hype

PS3 Publisher // Sony Computer Entertainment Developer // Insomniac Games Release // TBC
Players // 1 Online // N/A Release date // 27 November 2010

PREVIEW: [illegible] FALL OF MAN

No, it isn't futile

Resistance: Fall Of Man

SUFFER no delusions: *Resistance: Fall Of Man* is not a World War II FPS. Not even close. There are no Omaha Beach landings, no fresh-faced soldiers experiencing battle for the first time and – most importantly – there are no Nazis. The game isn't even set on our plane of existence, but an alternate 20th century. In the Fifites! It's important to get that out of the way because we all know looks can deceive – and looking at *Resistance* it's easy to mistake Insomniac Games' first PlayStation 3 endeavour for just another Nazi shooting gallery (albeit one with clear horror undertones, but *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* this ain't).

Initially *Resistance* might seem a bit of a departure for the Burbank, California, based developer, what with its other previously well-known credits belonging to the likes of *Ratchet & Clank* and *Spyro The Dragon*. Delve back a little further however and you'll find this isn't the first time Insomniac has dipped into the FPS pool. Older readers may remember a gem called *Disruptor* which appeared way back in 1997 on the PlayStation. The developer hasn't touched an FPS since. You may think *Resistance* would suffer for it, but Insomniac has become an interesting and inventive developer over the years – and *Resistance* is looking more interesting as news emerges.

Which is exactly what's happened – and Next3 is happy to report that we think this already intriguing shooter could be one of the best launch titles for Sony's next-generation home entertainment system.

Resistance is set in an alternate version of Britain in July of 1951. World War II didn't happen because mankind has spent the last few decades getting wiped out by a malevolent alien force: The Chimera – parasitic nasties that affect and mutate any life form they get their mitts on. They've obliterated the whole planet already and the UK appears to be all that's left. Because of this, many times you'll find yourself fighting various mutated human enemies, as well as aliens of contrasting size and shape. Some of these Chimera are tiny critters with propensities for stabbing people in the head (Leapers), whilst others are as huge as buildings and tend to stomp all over the place, ripping people in half (Widowmakers). They're certainly a diverse race but there's one thing they all have in common: they must be destroyed. Not just for your sake but that of humanity itself. No pressure, then.

The British have bulked up with what's left of the American army in a final stand against this awful enemy, in a bid to save the UK from oblivion. Player's will assume the role of Sgt.

A History of Violence

And a history of guns. Lots of guns.

Throughout the last ten years Insomniac Games has established itself as a developer with novel ideas. Based in Burbank, California, it was founded way back in 1994 and since then has also established itself as a developer with a mad love and respect for destructive weapons (it's also grown from a company with just 50 staff, to one with over 100 more than that). But forget the original, consistently entertaining videogames under Insomniac's belt: it's all about the big guns. Any *Ratchet & Clank* fan would swear by that.

As a result we've decided to recap on five of Insomniac's games - analyzing the weapons in each and how we think they rate and compare to one another (we neglected to include the *Spyro* games in this list for obvious reasons). This should give you some idea of how highly weapons factor into Insomniac's design philosophy. And if anything it should get you even more excited about the prospective weaponry available in *Resistance: Fall Of Man*...

1 DISUPTOR // 1998, PSOne
Insomniac's first game featured a plethora of human, alien and Psionic weapons. There was the 18mm Pistol, laser assault rifle-like Phase Repeater, AM Cyclone (a five-barrel shotgun), lock on Cannon and – our favourite - the Plasma Lance. You could also drain the life from enemies, electrocute them, and shield and heal yourself also.
WEAPONS RATING // 8/10

2 RATCHET & CLANK // 2001, PS2
The first of Insomniac's most popular franchise, *Ratchet & Clank* featured weapons negated by the fact you could finish the whole game using only the wrench. But it did feature the RYNO - a behemoth of sheer destructive beauty - as well as a Flamethrower, Minelayer, Bomb Glove and a gun that sucks up smaller enemies and shoots them out.
WEAPONS RATING // 6/10

3 RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO // 2002, PS2
Going Commando put a larger emphasis on stronger, more diverse enemies - forcing you to use weapons beyond the wrench. They were mostly new weapons too: the wrench did make a return but it was joined by the Blaster Pistol, Energy Shotgun, Sniper Rifle and bombs that could be upgraded to mini-nukes. It also featured a three-tier upgrade system.
WEAPONS RATING // 8/10

4 RATCHET & CLANK: UP YOUR ARSENAL // 2003, PS2
The best name and the best weapons: *Up Your Arsenal* allowed players to use weapons from the previous game if they had save files. This entry featured a Grenade Launcher, Rapidfire Machine gun, and Shotgun - as well as the ability to create black holes, unleash autonomous turrets and - brilliantly – turn the enemy into sheep.
WEAPONS RATING // 9/10

5 RATCHET & CLANK: GLADIATOR // 2004, PS2
Combat was the focus of this installment - which dropped most of the platform elements. It also featured a revamped multi-player and brand new co-op. The wrench returned along with more generic - but still fun - weapons in the form of a Pistol, Shotgun, Sniper-Rifle, Minelayer and grenades. It gets extra points for the Harbinger - this games version of the RYNO.
WEAPONS RATING // 7/10

CONTINUATION //

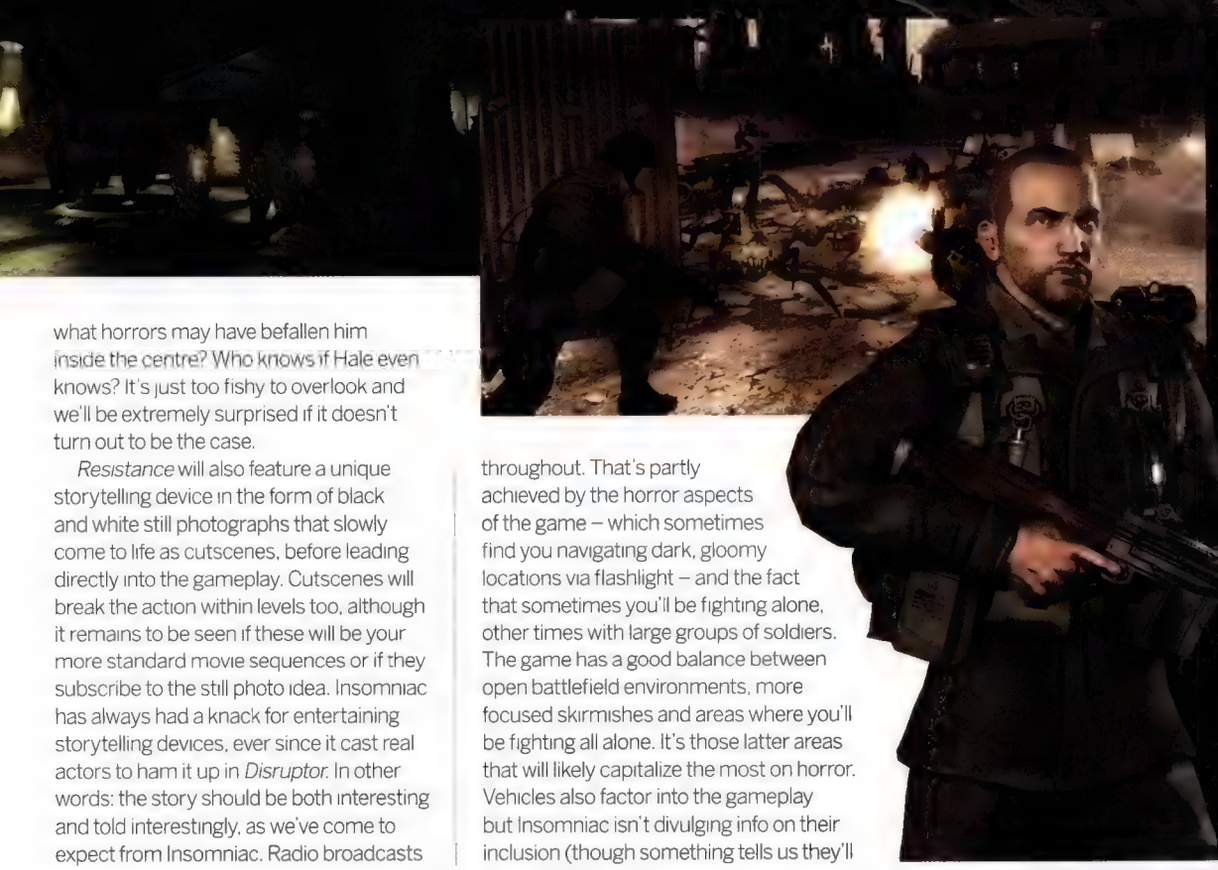
Nathan Hale a US Army Ranger who is apparently fearless when it comes to combat, possesses inventive tactical skills and happens to be an able squad leader. Which is a pretty good thing when you think about it (see the Hale Storm boxout for more Hale-related information).

You will also control one of the Chimera – a Chimera Hybrid, to be precise. Although this has only been revealed as a multi-player element, Insomniac has hinted that it may extend to single-player too. This generates some interesting conjecture: is Insomniac hoping to present the war from both sides – or is the Hybrid actually going to be Hale himself? At some point in Hale's journey he will begin to understand the Chimera language. This opens a realm of possibilities and draws to mind *Quake 4* – where your character transforms into a human/Strogg hybrid half way through the adventure. Perhaps Insomniac is utilizing the same idea (albeit more imaginatively than *Quake 4*, one hopes), where Hale – now half Chimera – uses those suicidal tendancies of his against the enemy.

After all, the game is called Fall of Man – a dual meaning perhaps?

Both characters will have their own advantages and disadvantages and will both control similar to one another. As Hale you can hold down the L2 button whilst moving and he'll start sprinting. Hold the same button as a hybrid and it enters Rage mode, making more severe and damaging attacks with its claws. But if you hit the Rage meter for too long the hybrid will overheat, damaging itself. While Hale can recharge his health autonomously if he avoids conflict long enough (a la *Halo 2*), a Hybrid will only recuperate after its Rage meter has fully charged.

You might think our hunch about Hale is a pretty large assumption, but the game opens with him hitting British soil and immediately being abducted by the Chimera in one of their transport units. Remember the tripods in the recent *War Of The Worlds* movie? Imagine those but with four legs instead of three (and not quite as shit). Hale is transported to a processing centre and narrowly escapes some time later. Keeeping that in mind, and remembering the various tests that Hale endured post-incident, who knows



Hale Storm

International man of madness

Nathan Hale also has an interesting background and you can tell Insomniac cares about story in *Resistance* based entirely on his character history. Hale was born in South Dakota in 1922 and enlisted in the army at a fairly young age after enduring a number of dead end jobs. He promptly joined the Inaugural Ranger Orientation Program. He nearly lost his life when he led an unconventional attack against a false target during a live-fire exercise. Most of the candidate squad he was leading and several of the army observers were killed and Hale barely left with his life.

THE ACCIDENT WAS BASED ON FAULTY MUNITIONS

Having sustained grievous injuries Hale spent his rehabilitation at the Army's Higgins Trauma Centre, under the watchful eye of the Army itself. He spent a long time there and after several dozen operations and lots of extensive physical therapy he was deemed fit to return to the frontlines. Despite his excellent performance back in action psychiatrists expressed their worries over Hale's almost suicidal approach to war. Which means he's a bit of a nutter, basically, and you're controlling him.

what horrors may have befallen him inside the centre? Who knows if Hale even knows? It's just too fishy to overlook and we'll be extremely surprised if it doesn't turn out to be the case.

Resistance will also feature a unique storytelling device in the form of black and white still photographs that slowly come to life as cutscenes, before leading directly into the gameplay. Cutscenes will break the action within levels too, although it remains to be seen if these will be your more standard movie sequences or if they subscribe to the still photo idea. Insomniac has always had a knack for entertaining storytelling devices, ever since it cast real actors to ham it up in *Disruptor*. In other words: the story should be both interesting and told interestingly, as we've come to expect from Insomniac. Radio broadcasts and other chatter will inform you of events and objectives as you play. Another unique aspect of the game's story is the idea that Hale is the main character – but he isn't the one telling the story. The whole thing is going to be narrated by a character called Rachel Parker - and just like Hale she features a rather dense character history painting her as much more than a mere superfluous story device. She isn't a nutter like Hale though unfortunately.

Insomniac's design philosophy with *Resistance: Fall Of Man* is to keep it as diverse and entertaining as possible throughout. That's partly achieved by the horror aspects of the game – which sometimes find you navigating dark, gloomy locations via flashlight – and the fact that sometimes you'll be fighting alone, other times with large groups of soldiers. The game has a good balance between open battlefield environments, more focused skirmishes and areas where you'll be fighting all alone. It's those latter areas that will likely capitalize the most on horror. Vehicles also factor into the gameplay but Insomniac isn't divulging info on their inclusion (though something tells us they'll be in multi-player too).

Thanks to the power of PS3 and its Blu-ray disc (which also has the space to feature all languages on one disc) it affords Insomniac more time to exploit the elements FPS fans hold dear to their hearts: splodes. *Resistance* has been locked in both single and multi-player at a constant 30 frames per second. Irrespective of what happens on screen *Resistance* is a 30 fps game. Initially that may seem disappointing to you, but consider this: it gives the developer more opportunity to create the best-looking and most destructive game possible: improved special effects, even more environmental detail, better interaction and – more specifically – bigger explosions. *Resistance* was always a gorgeous game – now it's going to look even better and more visceral. Regardless of how intense the battles get online or off *Resistance* will stay consistent throughout – and that's something Next3 is extremely pleased about.

We're also pleased with the new information released on the multi-player component. We saw the online aspect at E3

Do you save this lady or let her die in an amusing way?

Needing a Hero

Or holding out for a Zero till the morning comes...

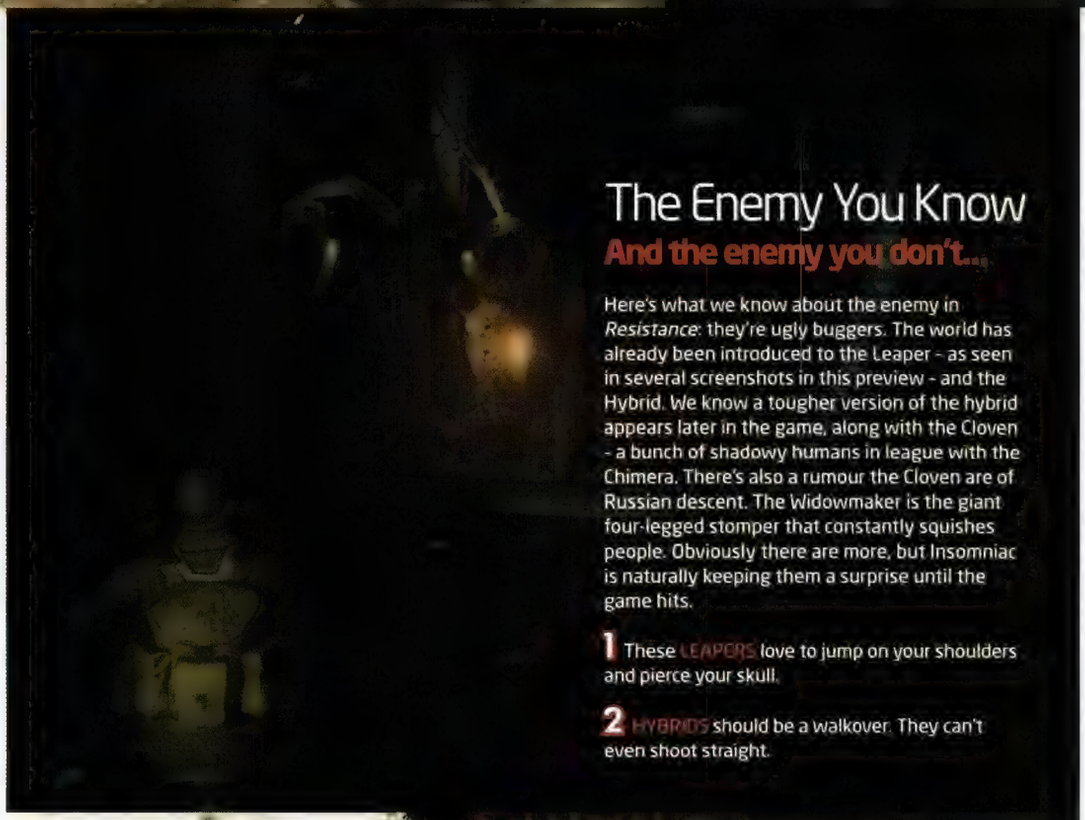
One of the game's distinctive features is its Hero Moments: areas in the game where you must save fellow soldiers from a fate most grisly. Shoot the Leaper off the top of their head and they'll revere you, continuing the fight. Hence: hero. Let the alien have its way however and news of your inadequacy will spread. Hence: bastard. People will know you didn't do your part and that may ultimately affect the way they fight with you (if they chose to do so that is).

CONTINUATION//

back in May. At the time Insomniac refused to release any in-depth information about what gamers would be doing online... but now we have an idea. There will be Deathmatch, allowing up to 40 plays to take the fight online. It works the same way it always has: the first to reach the Frag limit wins the game. Simple. Though it hasn't been announced yet there's every chance Team Deathmatch will factor into the proceedings too - what with players being able to assume the role of humans or Chimera Hybrids online (making way for a Humans vs Aliens set-up, we predict).

Away from Deathmatch are the Node and Meltdown modes. Node works similar to Conquest in *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat*: two teams race to capture as many nodes as possible, and the winner is the team with the most capture points. For every Node a team captures they can set that as a respawn point – so when you die you'll enter the game at that location. Meltdown is an extension of Node, adding the element that each Node is connected to the other team's base defense weapons as coolant devices. By taking over the Nodes in Meltdown you overheat the team's base and lower the defenses of your enemy. This allows you to storm their headquarters, dealing major damage to the opposition. The online modes featured also comprise an idea of circular wind vents embedded in the ground. Run over one of these vents and your character will catapult into the air. Stand still however and you can float there, popping shots at those beneath you, laughing as they try to return fire on your buoying position. The game will support full voice chat through the PS3's headset -- although we aren't sure if the game will ship with the hardware in tow. Melee attacks also feature, with two point-blank slaps reducing your opponent to zero health - whilst a chop from behind will take anyone down with little hassle. The multi-player will also connect to the overall story. Oh and did we mention four-player offline co-op?

Insomniac is placing a large emphasis on Smart Matchtmaking in an effort to make the multi-player as approachable for players a year from now as it will be at launch. Or in other words, those lazy enough not to buy the game in September can still get it a year from now and not suffer at the hands of experts. There will also be ranked matches – though we don't know enough on that side just yet. Unranked matches allow players to tweak game rules in many different ways and there's a chance Insomniac will also make the best player-tweaked games official downloadable content (of which there is more planned – it's an area Insomniac is interested in). *Resistance* is looking more and more like the must-have multi-player game at the PlayStation 3's launch. It just so happens to



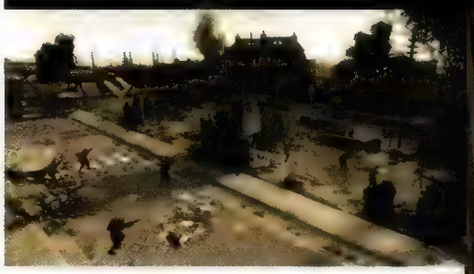
The Enemy You Know

And the enemy you don't...

Here's what we know about the enemy in *Resistance*: they're ugly buggers. The world has already been introduced to the Leaper - as seen in several screenshots in this preview - and the Hybrid. We know a tougher version of the hybrid appears later in the game, along with the Cloven - a bunch of shadowy humans in league with the Chimera. There's also a rumour the Cloven are of Russian descent. The Widowmaker is the giant four-legged stomper that constantly squishes people. Obviously there are more, but Insomniac is naturally keeping them a surprise until the game hits.

1 These LEAPERS love to jump on your shoulders and pierce your skull.

2 HYBRIDS should be a walkover. They can't even shoot straight.



also feature a particularly intriguing single-player game.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of *Resistance* lies in its arsenal. Insomniac Games has built a reputation throughout its career as a developer with a love for weaponry – especially those of the loud and explosive kind. The *Ratchet & Clank* series has featured some of the most interesting designs we've seen in a game and just as Insomniac builds on the strength of its award-winning multi-player component in *Ratchet & Clank: Gladiator*, so too does it continue the theme of original weaponry: there's the Auger – a Chimera weapon that shoots through walls and can also build a shield around the player; the Bullseye, which was the star of the show at E3 and is another Chimera design; the M5A2 Carbine featuring rapid-fire and missile-launching capabilities; and, of course, the shotgun – allowing you to shoot from one barrel or two. *Resistance* will feature several real-world weapons, modified thanks to the alternate world history idea.

As you can tell already Next3 is extremely excited about *Resistance: Fall Of Man*. Any reservations we have lie in the fact that there's no denying the alternate history and Britain setting is unique, but the idea of an alien invasion isn't. We're interested to see what Insomniac Games has planned – story-wise – for the Chimera and their excuse for taking over the Earth. It's not the sort of thing that will make or break the game – but with a very clear amount of *Resistance* dedicated to the story we just hope it's an interesting and perhaps even original one. The tilt pad feature sounds a tad gimmicky too: you basically shake the pad to loosen the grip of enemies that grab you. Beyond these slight worries we still stand by our predication that *Resistance: Fall Of Man* is set to be one of the best PS3 launch titles and we can't wait to resist.

%complete

next3 hype

PS3 **Publisher**//Ubisoft **Developer**//Gearbox **Genre**//FPS **Players**//1
Website//www.hellshighwaygame.com **Release Date**//TBA 2007

"Gearbox plans to tackle the big boys by offering a much more immersive experience this time around"

Ubisoft return to the frontline

Brothers In Arms Hell's Highway

IN THE genre of World War II first-person shooters, *Brothers In Arms* has rapidly become one of the better entries. On a par with *Call Of Duty* and now better than the once mighty *Medal Of Honor*, it not only captures the feel of the war but manages to bring a slightly different style of play into the mix, which has been welcomed by the gamers who feel that the genre had become too stale. Always a game on the periphery of those other two titles, however, Gearbox plans to tackle the big boys by offering a much more immersive experience this time around.

Taking on *Medal Of Honor* isn't as daunting for the development team as it once was. The series has seen a steady decline on the PS2 and while the games haven't been exactly terrible, *European Assault* was seen as too arcade-like by many and the fact that you fight on your own for the majority of the game was deemed as being totally unrealistic. *Call Of Duty* on the other hand is slightly more grounded in reality as you usually have some allies with you, although everything that happens is usually scripted and as such there's no real sense of loss when someone running alongside you is killed. *Call Of Duty* also places you in the shoes of different soldiers of different nationalities, which made any sort of story or timeline difficult to follow. This is what separates *Brothers In Arms* from the other two, as not only do you stick with the same squad throughout the game and (dare we say it) get to know them, but the missions take place in order and generally during the same campaign. While this may not offer up tremendous variety in terms of locations it does give you the sense that you are there, however vague that sense might be.

In keeping with this tradition of the series the plot for *Hell's Highway* sees the return of both Sergeants Baker and Hartsock, both of whom fall under your control during the game, as they are assigned to Operation Market Garden and sent into the fray via glider. Those familiar with the series will recognise other members of the squad but, as before, don't expect them all to still be alive by the end of the game.

The tactical gameplay of the first two instalments remains but the action has been ramped up to appeal to those who like their war games a little more frantic. With the extra power available the levels are now, on average, four times the size of those found in the previous games and this increase allows for a great deal more scope when it comes to the missions. The numbers of friendly and enemy soldiers has also been increased and while the tactical element could be circumvented in the past, it is now a far more important factor. The previously

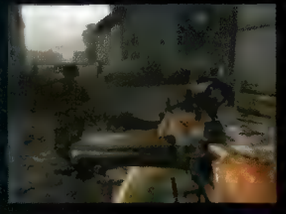
ABOUT HELL'S HIGHWAY: COMPETING WITH EA AND ACTIVISION FOR WWII HONOURS

Set pieces abound but will these rely too much on scripted gameplay?

The story so far...

Previously on Brothers In Arms

The story of *Brothers In Arms* is what really sets it apart from other titles in the genre and the main protagonists are ever present in the plot. It is especially important as it is based on the true experiences of the 3rd Squad, 3rd Platoon, F Company PIR, 101st Airborne Division. *Road To Hill 30* saw us in control of Sergeant Matt Baker (who was based on Sergeant Harrison Summers of the 502d PIR, 101st Airborne) as he and his squad are scattered over the French countryside in the airdrops that took place shortly before the invasion of Normandy in 1944. The plot saw the squad participating in various missions in the push towards the strategically important town of Carentan (it was the link between the Omaha and Utah beachheads), which was eventually captured by the Allies after a few days fighting.



Brothers In Arms: Earned In Blood switched the emphasis to Corporal Joe 'Red' Hartsock and began before the events in *Road To Hill 30* (in flashback) with missions based around what happened before Hartsock and Baker meet and also continue after his promotion at the end of the first game. After Carentan, Hartsock leads his squad to Cherbourg, which was a key port that allowed the Allies an entry to the northern coast of France from the English Channel.

Back in control of Matt Baker for *Hell's Highway* the plot continues the true story of his squad's encounters with the Germans across occupied Europe.

CONTINUATION//

simplistic squad control system has been revamped to encompass a far greater range of options, thus allowing you to plan attacks with more precision. As well as the assault and fire teams that were under your control before, a third team has now been added. For this team four new crews will be available at various points in the form of bazooka, machine gun, mortar and radio crews. The machine gun team can lay down huge amounts of suppressive fire to allow you to advance unmolested. The bazooka is obviously handy against armoured targets such as tanks, while the mortar team is perfect for taking out enemy emplacements from afar. For heavy assaults you can fall back on the radioman, who will call in artillery strikes to totally pulverise the enemy position. Obviously to take full tactical advantage of these new additions you'll need to ensure they are protected from enemy fire so getting everyone to run into the same enemy-infested area is not the soundest of plans. This extra team also gives you the opportunity to form more elaborate attack plans and the game has an almost open-ended approach to the missions, as you can set about them as you see fit. Obviously not every approach will work but you can keep trying until something sticks.

The use of the Unreal Engine 3 not only gives the game a gorgeous sheen but also has an effect on your tactical decisions too. You see, much of the environment is destructible now and what seems like great cover at first can rapidly deteriorate. For example, if you break out the machine gun and let rip on some wooden crates they will quickly disintegrate and put whoever is hiding behind them in harms way. Obviously they may well run for new cover before that happens but then you have the chance to pick them off. However, it's not just wooden structures that are destructible, now buildings can have serious damage caused to them too. Fire a bazooka at some enemies in a window and not only will the soldiers be taken out but a hole will be created wherever the rocket hit, sending bricks and glass everywhere. Chimneys and other similar structures can even fall from buildings into the street.

AI is sufficiently ramped for *Brothers In Arms* next-gen with your men using cover brilliantly.

which sounds like a scripted event but that isn't the case and the objects can fall in many different ways. These fallen structures can then provide cover, which can be used by friend and foe alike, but which will once again be destructible depending on what that structure is.

Whatever choice the enemy makes in regards to cover will be down to tactical decision-making from the AI, which was sporadically impressive in the previous games. Now it has been beefed up on both sides and enemies will react to situations in different ways, either going for all out assault if the opportunity presents itself or retreating and regrouping in a new position to keep you on your toes. As far as allies go not only does the AI apply to their tactics but also to their state of mind. Gearbox has always tried to maintain a narrative through each of the *Brothers In Arms* titles and nothing changes here. Characters from both previous games make an appearance and display scars that they picked up in previous missions – Hartsock still has the finger missing that he lost during *Earned In Blood*, while Baker has a scar on his forehead that he picked up during *Road To Hill 30*. The men in your squad generally look dishevelled and disheartened and if you look closely at their faces that really shows. Even their outfits look authentic and realistic.

Not only are the character models impressive to behold but also everything else looks amazing too. From the textures of the ground and buildings right up to the lighting, which is some of the most impressive we've seen in a next-gen game yet. Gearbox has tried to utilise the power of the new machines without giving everything that plastic look, which was popular in EA's first batch of sports titles on the 360. Using some customisation tools they have managed to tone this down so characters don't have that doll-like appearance and things such as leaves have a more natural appearance.

All of this is designed to immerse you in the experience as much as possible and give you the impression that you are really there. To add to this illusion your entire body is rendered in-game. By that we mean if you look down you can see your chest, legs and feet. If you clamber over a wall you will see your hand planted down. While none of this is particularly important and is something that most first-person shooters manage fine without, it once again adds to Gearbox's intention to get you into the game as much as possible. Characters are also partly controllable during cutscenes and while they will remain on a set path you can look around rather than just watching what you're forced to. It's not original or particularly

Essential WWII viewing

Don't just play it, watch it

There are countless war movies out there and many are regarded as classics. If you never bothered to sit down and watch one, why don't you get down to Blockbuster and educate yourself? To get you started here are a handful to check out...

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN (1998)
Often criticised for being overtly flag-waving and having no British troops whatsoever, Spielberg's entry into the genre is still a powerful piece of work. The D-Day landing is one of the most harrowing scenes in any WWII film and it effectively portrays the horror that occurred on those beaches.

THE LONGEST DAY (1962)
The most expensive black and white film ever made (until *Schindler's List*), this classic told the story of D-Day from almost every conceivable angle both on Allied and German sides. The film stars legends like John Wayne, Richard Burton and Robert Mitchum who all took part in some truly impressive (especially for the time) recreations of various battles.

THE GREAT ESCAPE (1963)
Famous for being on every Christmas (despite the fact that it rarely is these days) this classic should be seen by everyone. Telling the true story of Allied prisoners of war who make a daring escape from a German concentration camp, Steve McQueen and countless other big-name stars turn in some fantastic performances. While not being filled with action there's enough suspense to make up for it.

BAND OF BROTHERS (2001)
Okay, so it's not a film but this mini-series is the closest you'll get to watching *Brothers In Arms* instead of playing it. Based around many of the same missions, *Band Of Brothers* instead focuses on the 506th regiment rather than the 502nd, although they fought in many of the same battles.

We could bore you with graphics jargon here but we won't, simply stating: it looks pretty.

A bigger bang

Destroy the Nazi war machine one rocket at a time

The new crews at your command really change the way the game is played. While before you would use the same cover and move formation for the majority of enemy encounters you can now engage the enemy to distract them and move another team quietly into an advantageous position. Once in place they can let rip with their ordinance to take out the enemy position and allow you to continue. The bazooka is obviously the best choice for this, especially if you want to ensure no one is left standing.

"If you were impressed by Call Of Duty 2 on the 360, prepare to be stunned by Hell's Highway"

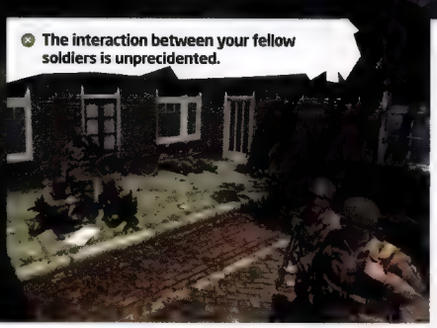
ABOUT HELL'S HIGHWAY: FEATURING SOPHISTICATED AI TO TUG AT THE HEART STRINGS

Interested in Operation Market Garden? *A Bridge Too Far* is essential viewing then.

Operation Market Garden

Highway to hell

The Hell's Highway of the title was the stretch of road that linked the bridges across the river Rhine in Holland. The bridges were the main objective for Operation Market Garden, which was designed by Field Marshall Montgomery in 1944 as a way to break the stalemate between Allied and German forces in the area. Had the bridges been captured then the war could well have been over a great deal sooner. However, the opposition the Allies faced was some of the strongest encountered and after they failed to capture the bridge at Arnham and then lost the 1st British Airborne Division the operation was deemed a failure and abandoned with thousands of Allied troops killed. It's the series of missions around this campaign that *Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway* focuses on. As it featured some of the most intense fighting in the war it should provide some frenetic action.



The interaction between your fellow soldiers is unprecidented.

CONTINUATION //

inspired but it's yet another little touch that brings you into the game world.

The characterisation of your squad is also being taken to the next level with the inclusion of 'Brotherhood Moments'. According to Gearbox these cutscene-like occurrences are used to highlight moments that define characters during the game. This can be anything from a simple piece of character-specific dialog that gives you some insight into their personality to interaction between characters as they help each other out if one falls or is wounded. Normally you would expect the CPU controlled characters to react in a totally scripted way to a fallen comrade by either playing out some sort of animation or just walking right by. However, as scripted as these moments sound Gearbox claims they are anything but. If and when these moments occur will depend on a number of factors during the course of the missions and their main aim is to humanise the CPU characters so they're not just a bunch of grunts, who blindly follow you around.

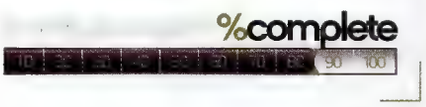
To further enforce that notion of personality and free will the squads on both sides now have four distinct levels of alertness. The first finds them relaxed and the soldiers will have their guns lowered while chatting away to each other or you if you happen to walk past them. In the patrol alertness the soldiers will have their weapons at the ready and be prepared to fire should anything happen. They might move their heads to look at you but they will always be concentrating on the possible appearance of enemies ahead. When in stealth mode the soldiers will move as quietly as possible. This sees them not only crouching or going prone (a first for *Brothers In Arms*) but also resisting the urge to fire until a particular parameter is met. For the soldiers to fire they must either be fired upon, be given the order to fire or be witness to you firing your weapon. This state allows you to encircle enemy positions effectively and kill them in the crossfire. The final state is that of combat, in which soldiers will be totally focused on firing their weapon if necessary and will ignore everything else around them unless new orders are given. This overhauled AI really brings a far greater sense of realism to the battlefield than anything we've previously seen in a WWII FPS.

Something else Gearbox has done to enforce the immersion in this life-like game world is the inclusion of minimal breaks between levels. Rather than have the missions broken up by short history lessons, cutscenes or loading screens, Gearbox is attempting to make a near seamless transition between levels. If you've played *Half-Life* you will be familiar with the style and it helped that game to keep its fantastic and involving story moving as briskly as possible.

In regards to that story, which is based on real events as much as possible, the maps Gearbox has created are as close to the real thing as possible and while it had access to substantial historical data for *Road To Hill 30*, the information available for Market Garden was considerably greater, enabling Gearbox to create an utterly believable world. Throughout this world you will also encounter civilians who are running for their lives. This has been seen in *Brothers In Arms* before but not to the scale that *Hell's Highway* offers. You won't have to spend the whole time on foot as you trek through Holland either, as both tanks and jeeps with mounted machine guns are said to be making appearances at various points in the story. We can't wait to see what sort of destruction is possible with a tank.

Hopefully these vehicles will be available in whatever multi-player modes Gearbox sees fit to include in the game too. No details have been released yet but it has reportedly been completely overhauled and will include more players (16 perhaps?). No doubt we will see co-operative play as well as deathmatches and no doubt some team-based capture The Flag type games. Whatever is included will no doubt be pretty special.

If like us you were impressed by what was achieved by *Call Of Duty 2* on the 360, then prepare to be stunned by *Hell's Highway*. Building on the in-depth gameplay and strong storylines seen in the first two, this looks to take the world of next-gen FPSs by storm and if what we've seen so far is anything to go by this could even become the must-have shooter on PS3 as long as it can live up to everything that has been promised. We don't really see why it shouldn't and the in-game footage that has been shown so far is just as impressive as we expected. With gorgeous visuals and gameplay to match, EA and Activision are going to need to pull off something pretty special to beat this.



next3 hype

Publisher Sega Developer Sega Genre [illegible] Players [illegible] Release Date November

Sonic and his silver lining (ewww)

Sonic The Hedgehog

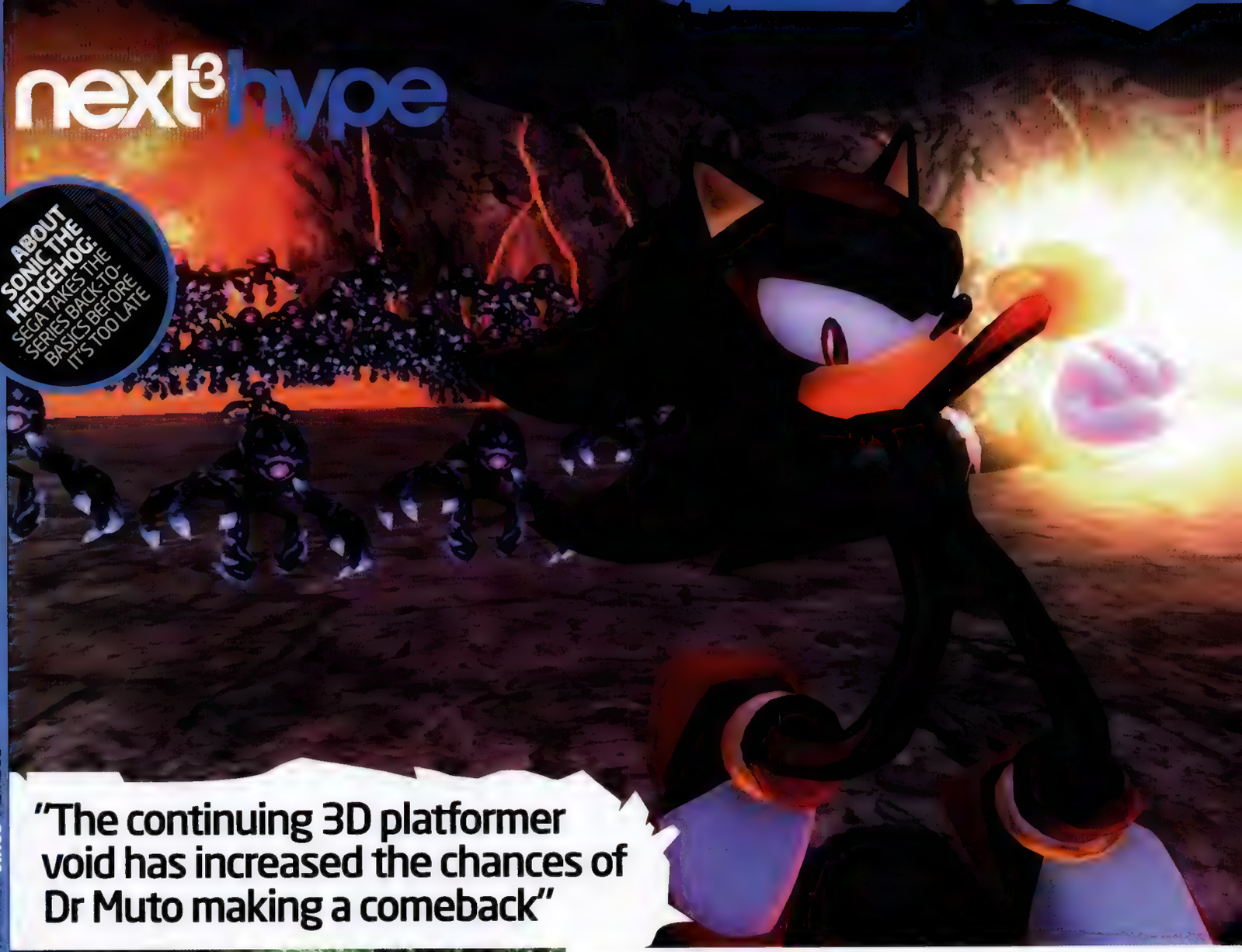
NO witty introduction here folks. No gentle meandering opener that quietly segues into the preview without you noticing – no god-awful puns dreamt up late at night powered by nothing but Red Bull and the stench of sweat – no throwaway "hey kids, look how great this game is going to be!" verbal cartwheels to convince you everything is going to be okay. Instead, we are left with a simple, desperate plea. Sega, please, please, please don't screw this up.

Next-gen *Sonic The Hedgehog* is Sega's back-to-basics attempt to regain some dignity for the long-suffering series. The 15th Anniversary trappings might make things easier for the marketing department but it's also a damning reminder that it's been too long since Sonic has been in a decent game. Sega has to claw its way out of a tricky situation it found itself in since 3D became en vogue. That Sega can't make a new 2D *Sonic* game goes without saying. Think about it. If Sega released a new *Sonic* game in two dimensions only, the marketing department would melt with confusion, the game would sell all of 15 copies, no one would know what was going on and the continuing 3D platformer void would increase the chances of *Dr Muto* making a comeback (hell, if someone out there is stupid enough to buy the *Vexx* licence, you can't rule out anything anymore). In short, it would be a disaster.

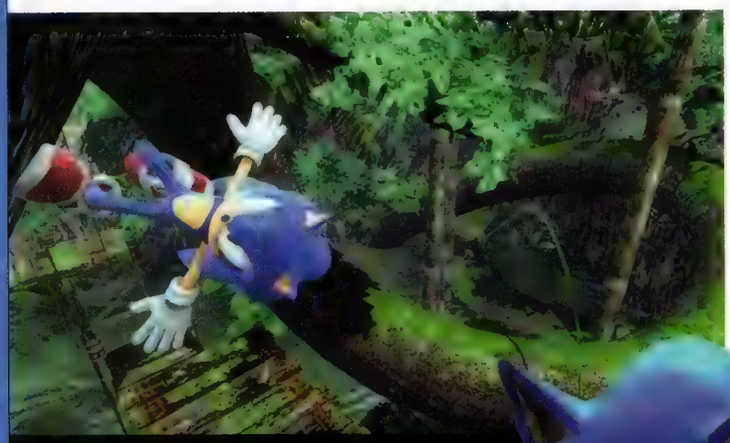
The first real attempt at dragging the blue hedgehog kicking and screaming into the world of three dimensions was *Sonic Adventure*. This outing concentrated on making sure the platforming elements worked and played it safe. The result? It had all the speed, excitement and intensity of scratching your arse while wondering where to go next. And hey! Wouldn't you know it, that's what you spent most of the game doing. After further outings in a similar vein which failed to rectify those problems, the second attempt to do something fresh was *Sonic Heroes*, which threw lightning speed at the series then turned around, stuck its fingers in its ear and hoped it worked, not daring to look back. It didn't. You can almost hear the fanboys crying as they remember the painful sight of Vector The Crocodile bouncing around the levels completely out of control until he glitched through the floor, fell a few hundred feet then died at the bottom of a ravine. It also didn't help that *Sonic Heroes* also featured a character called Big The Cat. Games featuring characters called Big The Cat can never be good.

This, realistically, is Sega's third attempt at switching things up and getting the elusive formula right before driving their legion of *Sonic* fans to Mega Drive emulators for the rest of their tear-soaked days. This is where we stop being negative, grumpy sods and can actually do the "hey kids, look how great this game is going to be!" verbal cartwheels mentioned in the intro. Gone are the painfully slow gameplay sandwiched between on-rails 'speed' sections. Gone are coattail clingers such as Big The Cat and Rubbish Chameleon

ABOUT SONIC THE HEDGEHOG: SEGA TAKES THE SERIES BACK-TO-BASICS BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE



"The continuing 3D platformer void has increased the chances of Dr Muto making a comeback"



Multi-player?

So a sulky second player can do more than just watch

Those who played *Sonic 2* will remember the pseudo-multi-player mode, as a second player could control Tails and be at the mercy of Sonic, carrying him around the screen, being left behind, using his 'invulnerability' to do the dirty work and so on. So far, there's no multi-player being promised for Sonic although Sega is holding back a third character. Will there be multi-player? It's doubtful but as long as Sega pulls its finger out and ensures there are some online leaderboards for, let's say, completing the levels in the fastest time, then we'll be happy. C'mon Sega. We've practically done the work for you. For free as well! And kill Big The Cat.

CONTINUATION //

Thing and the other nonsense characters. Gone is the MTV camera that swooped, ducked, dived and rolled but never actually performed any useful function, such as the classic Point Ahead Of Me So I Can See Where I'm Going™ manoeuvre. So much is gone and in its place, what we have instead is an actual game. Good lord, an actual *Sonic* game. Hey kids! Look how great this game is going to be!

On the surface, this is what *Sonic Adventure* and *Sonic Heroes* should have been. You know, playable. By combining the clever level design of the former and sensation of speed of the latter, it seems Sega has finally struck upon the right balance for its blue mascot. There are many staples of the series still present and correct. Yes, Sonic still collects rings. Yes, Sonic still loses rings when he gets hit. Yes, getting hit is followed by an ungainly scramble to get as many rings back in the next few seconds as possible. What's important is the sense of awe that exploring the levels carries over from the original in the series, married with the rip-roaring joy of tearing through each landscape as fast as you can. You can go fast, you can go slow, you can tackle the levels however you want. Most importantly, whichever you choose, both approaches are equally fun and this bodes well for *Sonic The Hedgehog*.

The level that Next3 tried shared similarities with Aquatic Ruin in *Sonic 2* and Marble Garden Zone in *Sonic 3*, featuring a mixture of grassy valleys and stony platforms that crumble around Sonic as he speeds through towards the exit. Thematically, Sonic hasn't changed a bit as his world is still painted in broad strokes of green and white and just under the surface, you can see old gameplay mechanics making their presence felt. For example, there are cleverly disguised on-rail pathways linking the platform elements, such as wind tunnels that carry Sonic across gaping chasms, but the difference is it never feels like you have control taken away from you. Even as you're being whisked across, you can still jump to attack enemies or collect more rings (or, more likely, to completely misjudge your jump and fall to your

Silver's telekenetic abilities could lead to some *Carrie* style acrobatics. We hope it doesn't get tiresome.

Combo Attack

It's just like Devil May Cry! (Maybe not)

You can jump. You can jump attack in the air. You can bounce off robots when you kill them. Take those three bits of information, lump them together, chew them up et voila! You have the recipe for combo attacks, as you can string these attacks together to bounce around the levels like a homicidal pinball. It's a nice way to show off and looks incredibly cool, at least until you overshoot and miss the last enemy, flinging Sonic headfirst down the nearest ravine.

It's Sonic! Swinging on a vine! Probably more exciting to play than it is to read about.

death, causing a muffled laugh from the PR sitting next to you desperately trying to keep a straight face. But we don't like talking about that.)

What's important is that while the levels feel familiar, they are incredibly fun to play. Which, you might remember, is the whole point of the games to begin. Ridiculous speed, multiple paths, trademark robotic enemies and most of all, a roaring sense of fun combine for a game that keeps the trademark Sonic feel intact and moves it into the third dimension without making any huge sacrifices elsewhere. The controls are slick enough, the camera is stable enough, the sense of direction is strong enough that you don't get lost. On top of that, there seems to be a new physics engine bubbling away under the shiny next-gen hood, adding a cute and welcome element of unpredictably into the series. When towers crumble, they won't always crumble the same way and likewise, bump into a crate and it will get knocked away depending on where Sonic hit it. It's the most irrelevant, pointless, needless detail a videogame could possibly have but it's nice to see it in there anyway. On the sly, we all spend at least five minutes kicking crates off ledges when games allow us to do so.

Has *Sonic The Hedgehog* retained his characteristic speed? Incredibly, despite his legs carrying 15 years of battle scars, yes he has. Sonic doesn't need much prompting to break into a full-on run, where he lets his arms dangle behind him and just runs, as a little backdraft of air is kicked up behind him. The levels are tight enough to let Sonic off the leash and run without losing control, encouraging you to make haste and enjoy the unrivalled sense of speed. At the same time, they're loose enough to encourage exploration and make you feel as though you're carving your own route. Tight AND loose! A videogame first. Sonic can still spin-attack enemies and while the combat shares a shade too much in common with *Sonic Heroes*, where spin-dashing towards enemies is as much about a leap of faith as it is trusting your own judgment, it's good enough. Sonic has never been a fighter, regardless of what *Sonic The Fighters* wants us to believe, and with the emphasis back on the exploring and the running, Sonic is in his element. So far, so good.

Then again, it wouldn't be a new *Sonic* game if there weren't elements that threatened to undo all the hard work. Remember how the fanboys cried in confusion when you introduced Vector The Crocodile? Remember how everyone thought Shadow The Hedgehog was actually quite rubbish? Remember Charmy Bee and that robot thing E-123 Omega? Ladies and gentleman, meet Silver the Hedgehog, the latest addition to

HISTORY

The Good, The Bad And The Ugly

It explains itself, really. The highs and lows of the Sonic series

THE GOOD:

Sonic The Hedgehog

The first *Sonic* game and the game that gave the Mega Drive a huge boost in its battle against Nintendo's SNES. Only really featuring three buttons - left, right and jump - Sega squeezed as much gameplay out of this primitive formula as it could. A true classic.

Sonic R

Incredibly easy, incredibly unbalanced but oh so much fun, this racing game somehow managed to keep the *Sonic* platform feel intact, complete with Chaos Emeralds to discover. Also featured the best/worst (delete as appropriate) soundtrack ever.

THE BAD:

Sonic Gems Collection

Following on from *Sonic Mega Collection*, this threw together various *Sonic* leftovers but mostly picked Game Gear and Master System *Sonic* outings. Eww. Slightly wonky ports of *Sonic R* and *Sonic CD* were the highlights of a pretty bad package.

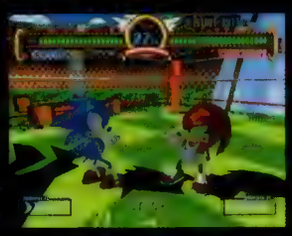
Sonic 3

Okay, so it wasn't bad. However, after the euphoric highs of *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Sonic 2*, it just wasn't that good either. The power-up shields were a nice touch but detracted from what the series was about and a few duff levels didn't help the *Sonic* cause.

THE UGLY:

Sonic Riders

Utter tosh. To quote the reviewer stuck playing the game at the time: "What's going on? I have no idea what's going on." The only justifiable reason for the existence of *Sonic Riders* is to prove how well Sega did to get the formula right the first time around with *Sonic R*.



Sonic The Fighters

Oh dear. Sega can do beat-'em-ups, as *Virtua Fighter* has proved. Sonic Team? It can't do beat-'em-ups. At all. Woefully unbalanced and no fun to play, the nadir of the *Sonic* series is Fang, a character who is the best in the cast as he can win by shooting bits of cheese. Incredible.

"What's important is that while the levels feel familiar, they are incredibly fun to play"

CONTINUATION//

Sega's scrapheap of rubbish characters. If we were to be lenient, we'd say this was a pimped up version of Shadow The Hedgehog. If we were being harsh, we'd say exactly the same thing but add "and if our own child drew something like as uninspired and clichéd that, we'd move house while he was at school" at the end. To call the Silver bland would be letting Sega off the hook. Look at the screenshots of Silver and tell us you find Silver exciting. Go on. We dare you. It's impossible. Note to Sega – please stop trying to make new characters. It doesn't work.

Tired character design aside, Silver's inclusion is an excuse for Sega to indulge itself and create legroom for a new direction for the *Sonic* series. Sonic is not a fighter. This is where Silver comes in. The blazing speed of the blue hero has been sacrificed to make way for a new combat slant, as Silver ditches the spin attack to destroy enemies and instead throws projectiles from distance. "Huh?" you ask. "Yes," we reply, perfectly aware that our answer doesn't make too much sense; we're aware of and are sensitive to your general confusion. Silver is the battle-hardened half of Sonic's next-gen adventure, the brutal comedown to the searing speed. Again, the camera behaves itself, so the combat remains the right side of enjoyable. Even so, projectiles? In a *Sonic* game? It's not quite as cringe-worthy as Shadow casually draping an uzi-wielding arm over the side of his lowrider before shooting some Westside hos, but still enough to prompt raised eyebrows from those who have followed the series since day dot. It works but whether *Sonic* fans will accept the huge change of direction remains to be seen.

In addition to projectiles, Silver also has telekinetic abilities. No doubt this will be explained via wonky cutscenes and bizarre storyline tangents but what this translates to is that objects can be picked up and placed elsewhere. Puzzles? Unsurprisingly, yes. Rather than using telekinesis to fetch drinks or tidy the house, Silver using his powers to

ABOUT SONIC THE HEDGEHOG: THE SILVER SECTIONS SCARE US; THEY COULD DAMAGE A GREAT GAME

Some amongst our number are sceptical about the inclusion of Silver. We shall see.

Sonic's trainers are yet to be sponsored by Nike or any other sports company. Surely they're missing a trick?

Sonic: The Cartoon

Witness

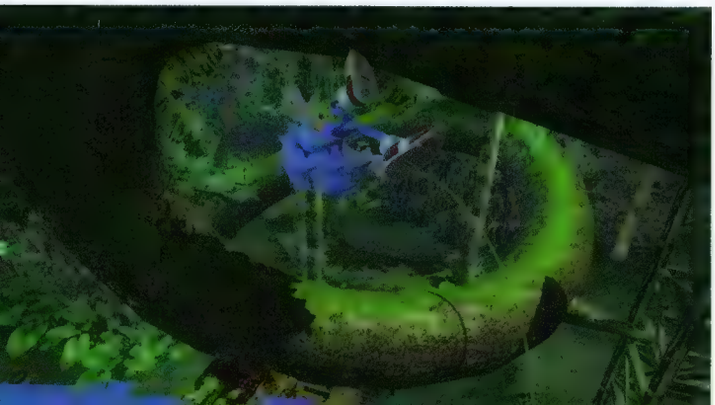
At the height of Sonic's popularity several god-awful cartoons were made bearing his name. Thanks to YouTube, deranged fans have twisted these cartoons up, re-edited them and put Linkin Park on the soundtrack. Why? We can't answer this question and we suspect that the people who have created these monsters would struggle, but they are worth a look if you're online.

solve puzzles of the stack-these-objects-up-and-make-your-own-staircase variety. With the pace of the game slowed right down, there's plenty of room for Sega to insert more elaborate, complicated head-scratchers into the mix. With the emphasis on combat and puzzles over speed and platforming, this is shaping up to be a direct contrast to the blue half of Sonic's next-gen outing – a slower paced, deliberate adventure as opposed to a white knuckle ride through the scenic route.

Which brings us nicely to our next point. It's not just the gameplay that's different about the Silver side of the game either but the whole look. Gone are the green and whites, in come the orange and browns. Yes, it's a post-apocalyptic world! With its power to throw polygons around a sulky child throwing Lego bricks at his mum, PlayStation 3 has no problem giving *Sonic* the next-gen lick of approval. It's the actual design itself of Silver's levels that looks somewhat uninspired and stuck in the past. Burning buildings? Darkened skies? Unnecessary fire? Oh, come now, we've played more than enough bad videogames to need a little more than an artist grumpily slapping down muddy brown textures to ignite the pulses in our gaming hearts. There's still plenty that Sega hasn't shown off yet, so there's adequate room for a big U-turn on Silver's levels, but there's a lot of mileage to cover if Sega really wants to go to town and impress PlayStation 3 owners.

Next3 can predict that everyone will be very, very happy with the Sonic half of the game. Fanboys, newcomers, those who don't know what's going on, casual gamers, hardcore gamers, men, women, children, adults, hedgehogs, rubbish chameleons, Big The Cat, EVERYONE will enjoy it. This is vintage *Sonic* hitting form at long last and it is also very good. The X factor in this equation is the Silver half of the package. There's no denying that Silver's segments have been carefully crafted and Sega wouldn't make a move this bold without some logical thought behind it but the question is how the two very different halves will gel together. The reason you don't see Metallica performing Abba covers, pizza flavoured ice-cream and Keanu Reeves co-starring alongside Al Pacino in a romantic comedy is that some things, no matter how good they are individually, just don't go together. As for whether Sonic and Silver is a partnership destined for greater things, we'll just have to wait and see...

The obligatory loop-the-loop exemplifying the sheer sense of speed of the *Sonic* series.



%complete

PS3 **Publisher**// Square Enix **Developer**// Square Enix **Genre**// RPG **Players**// 1 **Release date**// 09/15/2007

Three Final Fantasy games for the price of one suffix

Final Fantasy XIII

%complete

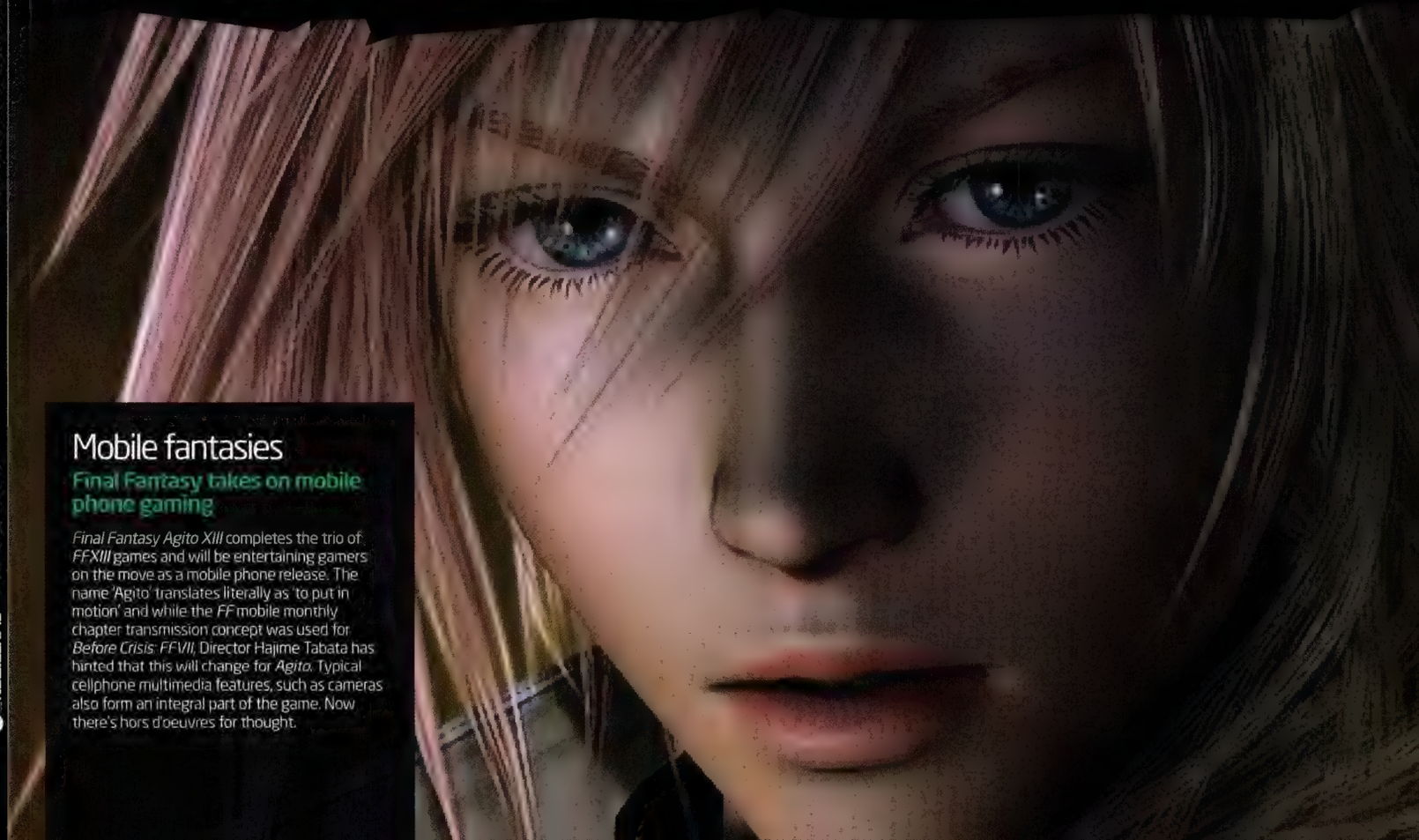
ABOUT FINAL FANTASY XIII: THE GAME WITH MORE FANS THAN SEQUELS (JUST) PURSUES ANOTHER HIT

XIII – you don't see too many games reaching that venerable X, let alone beyond. The *Final Fantasy* series has survived the rise and fall of several consoles, developers and publishers, and has spawned a number of portable and PC conversions to cross onto its fifth generation console: the PlayStation 3. Despite a number of critics questioning the validity of a stagnating franchise, *Final Fantasy*'s massive fanbase continues to demand iteration after iteration. So, to that end Square Enix is making three *Final Fantasy XIII* games.

The trio has been collectively named Fabula *Nova Crystallis*, or "the new tale of the crystal" and two of these, *Final Fantasy XIII* and *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* are launching on the PS3. It's the same compilation concept used for a series of games based around the lore of *FFVII*, of which the last instalment *Crisis Core: Final Fanstasy VII*, will also be released next year.

Much of the juicer information is being kept close to Square Enix's chest, but some details have been made apparent. *Versus* will be set in an alternate present day reality and *Final Fantasy XIII* will be set in the future. FFXIII will feature a female lead (another Aerith wannabe?), the plot will be typically tragic and both games with take the Active Time Battle system to a new level with a time manipulating feature.

Square Enix has delegated the work to two of its development teams: the *FFX* team has been working on *XIII* since E3 last year and the *FFVII: Advent Children* team since finishing *Kingdom Hearts II*. So hopefully staff haven't been stretched thinly and we can look forward to another epic role-playing instalment next year.



Mobile fantasies

Final Fantasy takes on mobile phone gaming

Final Fantasy Agito XIII completes the trio of *FFXIII* games and will be entertaining gamers on the move as a mobile phone release. The name 'Agito' translates literally as 'to put in motion' and while the *FF* mobile monthly chapter transmission concept was used for *Before Crisis: FFVII*, Director Hajime Tabata has hinted that this will change for *Agito*. Typical cellphone multimedia features, such as cameras also form an integral part of the game. Now there's hors d'oeuvres for thought.

The machine gun race was never a popular event, just look at their faces

Need for Speed Carbon

Burn graphite in EA's latest

PS3 **Publisher**//EA **Developer**//EA Black Box **Genre**//Racing **Players**//TBA **Website**//http://www.ea.com/nfs/carbon/us/home.jsp **Release date**//November 2006

ONE WORD is sometimes all it takes to sum the entirety of something huge and in the case of the *Need For Speed* franchise making its move onto PlayStation 3 'carbon' does just that. The definition alludes to many things, such as the non-metallic element drawing to mind Canyon Duels (the brand new one-on-one battle mode), self-bonding elements illustrating team-based aspects of the game, and finally the sublime beauty of the gorgeous new face of *Need For Speed*: Emmanuelle Vaugier. If you haven't had the good fortune to have seen her, you can trust us on this one: she really is quite a special lady.

Need For Speed Carbon is all about danger. Canyon Duels represent one quarter of the full game and they aren't about winning by coming first, but by accumulating the most points. Each Duel is set over two legs: you tail your opponent in the first and they chase you in the second. The aim is to stick close to them and therefore glean points in the process – whilst overtaking them for ten seconds is automatic victory. However your opponent is capable of doing the same in round two.

Thankfully you can knock him right through a guard-rail if he attempts to get too close – but don't forget that he can, and most likely will, do just the same to you. Good thing you won't always be alone in *Carbon* – you'll have a crew to help out during some races. You can issue orders to them, thus aiding your victory in races by having them tail and block opponents. These are just a couple of many new elements introduced in *Carbon*. Expect more news when we finally play it.

ABOUT NEED FOR SPEED CARBON: FAST CARS AND FAST WOMEN FOR ANOTHER SURE-FIRE-HIT

%complete

The machine gun race was never a popular event, just look at their faces

No in-game shots of *Need For Speed Carbon* exist as of yet, just these taken from a slick trailer.

PS3 Publisher// Ubisoft Developer// Ubisoft Montreal Genre// Tactical FPS Players// TBA
Website// http://rainbowsixgame.uk.ubi.com/vegas Release date// 17 November 2006

Rainbow Six Vegas

When your chips are down, hit the ground

LAS VEGAS Mayor Oscar Goodman doesn't want you to play *Rainbow Six Vegas*. Despite being suspiciously quiet around the fact IO Interactive staged a triple assassination there in *Hitman: Blood Money*, he wants the safe, carefree image the city has garnered to remain forever intact.

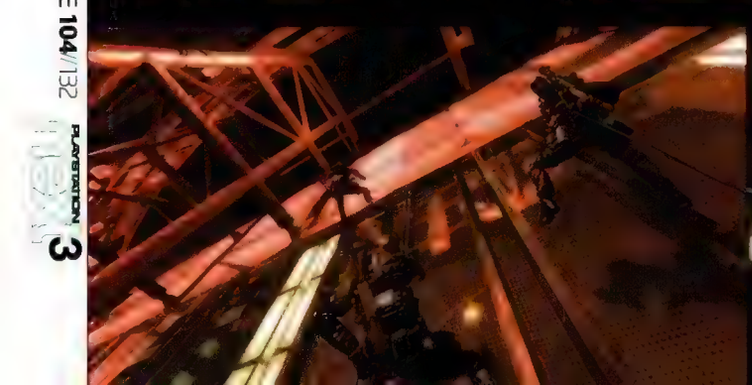
Whatever... we just want to kill terrorists in shiny, pretty environments. The sixth game in the popular *Tom Clancy* franchise, *Rainbow Six Vegas* uses the colourful City of Sin to capitalize on the power behind next generation hardware.

Las Vegas is under Martial Law. Ding Chavez and the previous Rainbow team is absent, and now you're leading a brand new three-man fireteam through one explosive night on The Strip. Observe, plan and assault your way through faithfully recreated locations

Rainbow Six Vegas will also feature a consistent real-time aspect making the adventure on-going: no between-level menus, no pre-mission planning screens and no cutscenes.

Rainbow Six Vegas will breach and charge its way onto PlayStation 3 shelves this November.

%complete



Rainbow Six Vegas

ABOUT RAINBOW SIX VEGAS: TOM CLANCY ON PS3, WITH A GLITTERING BACKDROP

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Factor 5 Genre N/A Players N/A Website http://www.factor5.com Release Date November 2006

ABOUT LAIR: KILL SPECTACULAR DRAGONS IN THE AIR; JUST AVOID THE FLOOR

Lair

Not to be confused with Dragon's Lair

%complete

In the vast lexicon of film there exist very few about dragons. Sure, a number have dragons in them – such as *Mulan*, *The Jabberwocky*, and *Harry Potter* and the Something of Whatever – but few stick the majestic beasts in the fore. There are some, and a couple are genuinely excellent too – but for every *Dragonheart* or *Pete's Dragon* there are the *Dungeons And Dragons* and *Reign Of Fire*'s.

In short: dragons haven't had their chance to shine in film and the same applies to games too. Until now it seems.

Developed by Factor 5, *Lair* is a game about dragons – big, angry dragons with massive teeth and bad attitudes. The footage we've seen depicts massive open-air battles between the fiery beasts – and some *Shadow Of The Colossus*-esque on-foot bits too. It seems you can pit dragon against dragon or dismount and take it on David and Goliath style too.

But cynicism ensues: the on-foot sections in Factor 5's previous game, *Star Wars Rogue Squadron 3: Rebel Strike*, were abysmal. *Lair* looks gorgeous and the multi-player purports to hold up to 64 players – so let's hope the on-foot sections are better than *Rebel Strike*. But it's the aerial stuff that counts; let's hope *Lair* does dragons justice.

ABOUT THE OUTSIDER: YOU'RE PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE, BUT WITH MORE FREEDOM THAN EVER

Look how frigging free you are; you can go left or right.

PS3 Publisher//N/A Developer//Frontier Development Genre//Action Players//N/A Website//http://www.frontier.co.uk Release Date//TBA 2008

The Outsider

Mr. Braben goes to Washington

The Outsider bares a special lineage: it's being created by Frontier Developments, run by David Braben – co-creator of classic *Elite* (and currently heading development on the fourth game in that series, alongside *The Outsider*). Elements from both games appear to be permeating each other – cause for celebration.

Elite was one of the first open-ended game designs. Many still hold it in high regard and it appears frequently on Top 50 Games Of All Time lists (if they're being honest). *The Outsider* is a high-tech thriller, set in Washington DC and is also an open-ended affair. Braben has taken elements from the design of *The Outsider* and implemented them in *Elite 4*, and vice versa.

You, the outsider, find yourself public enemy number one. The player can change the outcomes of the story, and the game itself. Braben has stated that this could only be achieved with next-gen hardware. We're not sure what that means but it's intriguing.

%complete

We can't wait to lasso our first villain. We hope they're a Nazi.

PS3 Publisher//Activision Developer//Lucasarts Genre//Action Adventure Players//1
Website//www.activision.com Release date//TBC

Indiana Jones 2007 (Working title)

No time for love, Dr. Jones

ABOUT INDIANA JONES 2007: THE FILM WITH RAG DOLL ANIMATION AND A LUCAS STORY

FIND SOMEONE who doesn't like *Indiana Jones*. We dare you. Such a person surely doesn't exist. *Star Wars* might get all the plaudits, but if there's a film trilogy more universally loved than the adventures of a hatted Harrison Ford, we haven't heard of it. So, what better reason than that to get us suitably excited for LucasArts' return to the Fedora and whip? What better reason indeed?

Indian Jones 2007 is a stunning looking game, a statement that is becoming scripture with every passing PS3 preview. Lifelike characters, beautiful environments... you've heard this a million times, haven't you? So what sets *Indiana Jones 2007* apart from the pack? Quite simply, it's all about the physics.

Using a new technology called, bizarrely, euphoria, *Indian Jones 2007* takes rag doll to the next level. It means that the game's action scenes will have a completely organic feel – you'll never see the same reaction twice. Smash a goon's head into a car door, and he'll fall entirely in proportion to the angle of, er, head smashing. It's like *Jurassic Park*, when Jeff Goldblum talks about chaos theory. Only completely different.

At its heart, *Indian Jones 2007* is an action adventure. It's you versus the Nazis, with all the punch-ups, whip action and general tomb-raiding shenanigans you'd expect. Environments are completely destructible, Indy cracks wise at every opportunity and you get to play with a PS3 standard recreation of the Fordster. What more do you want?

%complete

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

By George

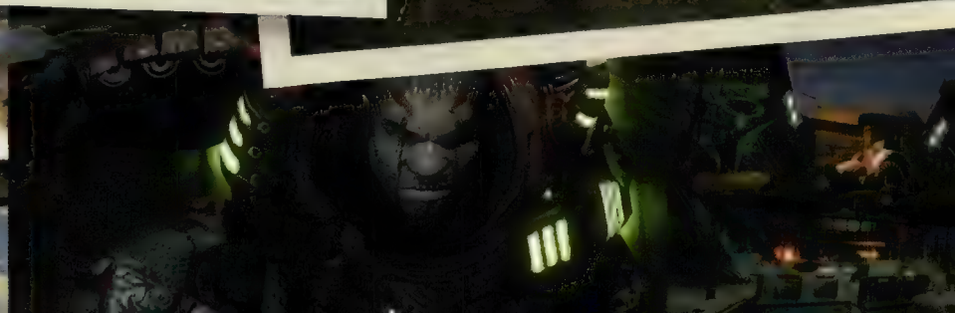
Does anyboy remember The Phantom Menace?

The bearded one himself, George Lucas, has been involved with *Indiana Jones 2007*'s scripting process. Whether or not this is a good thing, only time will tell, but we do know that the game is set in 1939, one year after the events of the *Last Crusade*. We hold high hopes for a Sean Connery mini-game; one that involves using the PS3's tilt control to shape his moustache.

Look! You can chuck men off trams. Just like in the films. Oh wait...

next hype

PS3 Publisher Midway Games Developer Epic Genre FPS Players 1-8 Website www.unrealtournament2k7.com/ Release date TBA



ABOUT UNREAL TOURNAMENT: COULD BE THE PLAYSTATION 3'S DEFINITIVE MULTI-PLAYER FPS

Unreal Tournament 2007

And nothin better than the Unreal thing

WHILST previous console versions of *Unreal* have fared pretty poorly, the time has come for one of the most pivotal online PC shooters to make a name for itself on the PlayStation 3. Much like *Half-Life*, there will no doubt be a fair few of you out there that haven't encountered *Unreal Tournament* at its peak, but as an all-out action multi-player first-person shooter, there are few better titles in the world of gaming.

But what's so special about this futuristic gameshow shooter? New weapons, more complex physics, and new vehicles – something we've been told will be a big focus of the PlayStation 3 version specifically. *Unreal* hasn't been hugely popular of late, and many lovers of the series have taken to playing offline against bots for some reason, but with this scheduled to hit PC as well as PlayStation 3, it'll be interesting to compare just how happily both groups take to this awesome looking blaster.

%complete

PS3 Publisher//THQ Developer//Kaos Studios Genre//FPS Players//1-32 Release date//TBA 2007

The game is set in the very near future, so expect recognizable urban war zones.

The gun show

Kaos goes to town on the weapons of war

Kaos' approach also gave them licence to present the next-generation in military weaponry. By studying contemporary military designs and factoring in likely technological progressions, Kaos has come up with 60 controllable vehicles and a wide range of unique weapons for use in the game. As well as updates of classic instruments of war, there will be a 'gun-cam' that will allow you to shoot round corners, and remotely control spy drones and car bombs.

ABOUT FRONTLINES: TRULY EMBRACING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A NEXT-GENERATION TITLE

Fighting tomorrow's battles today

Frontlines: Fuel Of War

HAS 'next-generation' lost its meaning? In reference to consoles, probably not; after all, the term was originally coined for marketing purposes, the money-men eager to inflate the notion of a forthcoming revolution. For many, though, the Xbox 360 has underlined how unsuitable the term is to describe the software – the same ideas and approaches given a shiny paintjob don't scream next-generation.

Kaos understood that next-generation should apply to everything, not just the graphics, and with this mindset they began *Frontlines*. Scouring the headlines for the next threat to mankind, they came away with global warming. By setting *Frontlines* in a world where fossil fuel reserves have diminished, triggering a war between America and the EU on one side and the Russians and Chinese on the other, gives the setting a next-gen feel – the fiction of the game more uncomfortably real after this record-breaking summer.

Multi-player will enable you to talk with your teammates to co-ordinate attacks.

The gameplay will incorporate elements of RPG, RTS and open-world into an FPS framework. Your role in each mission will not be dictated; whether a sniper, a medic or a Rambo-style hardman, you will decide how to approach each mission. Campaigns are fought along fronts so you must choose an entry point, but after that it's up to you. There will be multiple objectives immediately available with an over-riding goal of pushing the line forward, so a good tactical brain will be all but necessary. With a year to go until release there's a long road ahead, but *Frontlines*' commitment to creating an experience that merits the 'next-gen' tag promises great things.

%complete

"Initially those flying machines looked like dirt bikes. Now they just look like flying machines".

The front can be approached in a number of ways. It will be up to you to decide the best path.

ABOUT GENJI 2:
LOOKING TO BUILD ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOLID, IF UNSPECTACULAR, ORIGINAL
complete
10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

PS3 **Developer**// Game Republic Studios **Release Date**// November 2006 **Website**//http://www.genjips2.com/

Genji 2

Demo May Cry

Much derided since its E3 demo debut, *Genji 2* could still become an enjoyable hack-'n-slash adventure. On PS2, *Genji* existed as an enjoyable *Onimusha*-style action title and we'd argue it formed the perfect foundation for Yoshiki Okamoto's Game Republic Studio to build upon. It wasn't perfect, but we're eager to try the sequel.

Players assume the role of Yoshitsune, with Benkei tagging along. It's a new adventure set three years after *Genji* and two characters will join the duo in their quest. *Genji 2* has improved action enabling on-the-spot character and weapon changing, hundreds of enemies on-screen and massive sea-based battles.

Genji was an enjoyable – and amiable – adventure and its roots have been planted. Lets hope Game Republic Studio can grow *Genji 2* into something much more special than the first game. Giant crabs and all.

PS3 **Developer**// Ubisoft Paris **Release Date**//December 2006
Website//http://raymanzone.uk.ubi.com/ravingrabbids/

Rayman Raving Rabbids

Return of the French thingy

The release of another *Rayman* title would usually be met not with our excitement or reverence, but overwhelming apathy. The third game wasn't great. Neither was the second, really. But the reason we liked the first game is precisely the same reason we're looking forward to *Rayman Raving Rabbids*: Michel Ancel.

The man behind the wonderful *Beyond Good & Evil* and *King Kong* – arguably one of the best games based on a film – is back in the director's chair. Everything we've seen so far – from footage of Rabbids trying to play football, to giant stompy monster bunnies – tells us this could be the best *Rayman* yet.

Gameplay specifics are being kept under wraps. But as with *Beyond Good & Evil* we expect a constantly altering, diverse and entertaining adventure – and a damn funny one too. It might not be *BG&E 2*, but it is another Ancel game. For that we can be grateful.

%complete
10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

PS3 **Developer**// Propaganda Games **Release Date**// TBA 2007
Website// http://buenavistagames.go.com/

Turok

Whether you want it or not: he's back...

After the complete train wreck of a game that was *Turok Evolution*, Acclaim went bust and vanished from the face of the earth. But *Turok* didn't go with it. Now the reigns have fallen on Buena Vista Interactive and developer Propaganda Games and judging from the little we've seen the next *Turok* is an intriguing beast. It looks like a far more interesting game than *Evolution*, that's for sure.

And there appears to be some actual dinosaur-hunting going on too – which *Evolution* haters will be pleased about (although we're not sure if the emphasis is squarely back on dinosaurs just yet).

It's running on Unreal 3 technology and looks stunning because of it. The game hints at co-operative play with NPC's and there's a very distinct sci-fi atmosphere pervading everything. Seeking cover also appears to factor largely. We're certainly intrigued by the game – but can Buena Vista wash away the dirty memories *Evolution* left behind?

%complete
10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

next3hype

PS3 Developer / Digi-Guys Release Date / TBA 2007 Website / www.wardevil.com

Great looking screenshots, but we really can't enlighten you further.

WarDevil: Enigma

A devil in the details

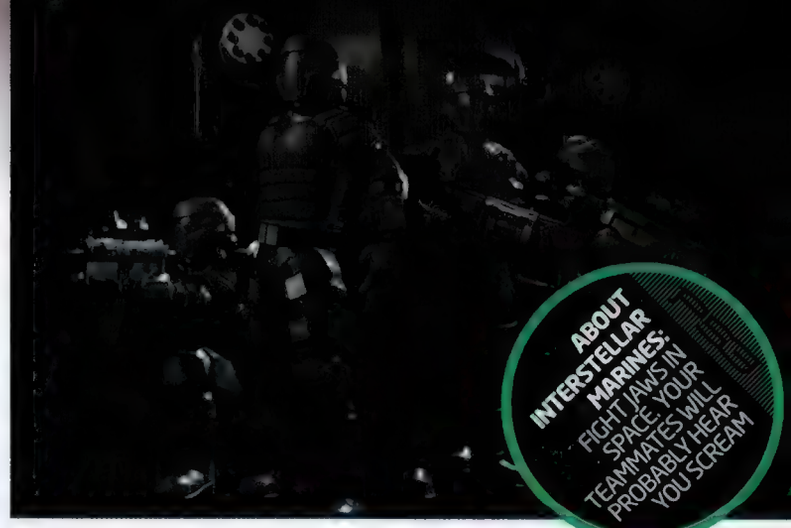
It's hard to get excited about things when there's barely any information about them. *WarDevil* is one of those games. We know it's a PS3 title and that it has zombie-ish robot things in it, which the gamer will no doubt be fighting against. There's also a chance it's set on an alien planet (or even the distant future, because it's usually a barren landscape affair).

But that's about it. There is no other information to go on and it's left us scratching our heads with conjecture. It doesn't help that the developers are under a non-disclosure agreement either. A real-time demo was showcased at E3, displaying the game's engine – and it gave audiences the chance to see a videogame running in full 1080p mode at 60 frames per second. That's the power behind *WarDevil*'s RTE1080 engine and it's sure to please HDTV owners out there. 1080i and 720p are also supported.

The game is being developed by Ealing Films Studios UK-based Digi-Guys and was formerly known as the slightly comical WarDevil: Unleash The Beast. Sexual jokes aside, Digi-Guys couldn't have chosen a more apt title: *WarDevil: Enigma* practically sums up the whole game. Come on Sony, lift that bloody NDA and let the developer speak!

%complete

10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100



ABOUT INTERSTELLAR MARINES: FIGHT JAWS IN SPACE. YOUR TEAMMATES WILL PROBABLY HEAR YOU SCREAM

Interstellar Marines

In space sharks can sense your screams

PS3 Developer//Zero Point Software Release Date//TBA 2007
Website//wwww.interstellarmarines.com

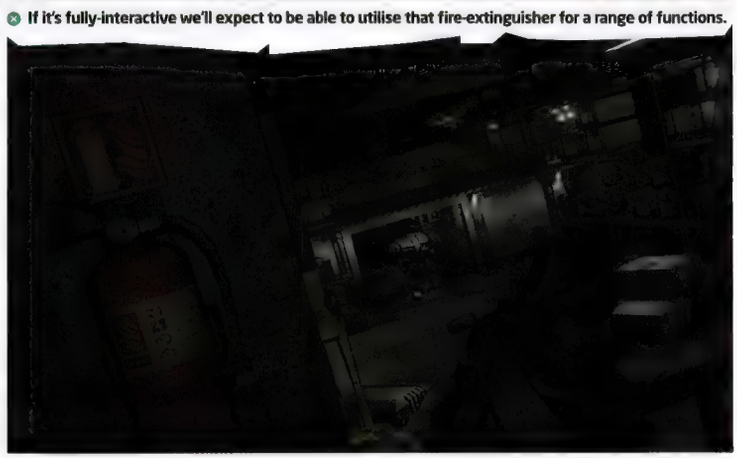
Formerly Project IM, Zero Point Software's *Interstellar Marines* is an intriguing PS3 title because it's developed by a very small team (we're talking single digits here); it's a FPS based on Unreal 3 technology and planned as the first part of a trilogy. *Interstellar Marines* is set at the beginning of the 22nd Century, when man's intrinsic desire for more resources has taken him beyond the very stars themselves.

A proof of concept trailer was released at E3, hinting at the sort of game *Interstellar Marines* could be: that is, a good one. We never usually put much stock in these sorts of things but *Interstellar Marines* is an exception. Zero Point is devoted to creating a realistic experience within the context of its vast, epic universe. It's concentrating on the idea of first contact with another sentient race.

The game will feature fully interactive environments – though we take that claim with a pinch of salt (picking up and knocking over stuff is not full interaction). There's a four-player co-operative for the single-player and several multi-player options that Zero Point is keeping quiet about. The trailer depicted space ships and ED-209-like robots – perhaps these will factor into the multi-player too? There's a strong horror element towards the end of the footage, proving *Interstellar Marines* is perhaps more diverse than we imagined.

%complete

10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100



If it's fully-interactive we'll expect to be able to utilise that fire-extinguisher for a range of functions.

television X
SIZZLING NEW SHOWS EVERY NIGHT! FROM 8PM UNTIL 5.30AM
BEST VALUE ADULT PACKAGE!
YOU CAN NOW WATCH 12 CHANNELS FOR 1 GREAT PRICE
televisionX
PLUS
RedHot
AROUND 4p per channel per night
THE ULTIMATE ADULT PACKAGE
televisionX
televisionX raw
televisionX live
CHANNEL 903
CHANNEL 904
CHANNEL 905
CHANNEL 917
RedHot rears CHANNEL 924
RedHot 40+wives CHANNEL 925
RedHot amateur CHANNEL 926
RedHot raw CHANNEL 927
RedHot wives CHANNEL 928
RedHot climax CHANNEL 929
RedHot allgirl CHANNEL 930
RedHot reality CHANNEL 931
SEE THE FREEVIEWS ON THE CHANNELS ABOVE TONIGHT!
OR PHONE:
0871 271 6869
24 HOURS A DAY
OR VIA INTERNET:
www.televisionx.co.uk
www.redhottv.co.uk
OR REMOTE CONTROL:
SELECT CHANNEL 969 AND
PRESS THE RED BUTTON
ON YOUR REMOTE CONTROL - DURING FREEVIEWS
CALL ONLY ONCE. LINES OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY - 7 DAYS A WEEK
USE YOUR
MasterCard
VISA
Switch
CARD OR BY
DIRECT Debit
YOU CHOOSE WHAT TO WATCH FROM 12 CHANNELS. UP TO 91/2 HOURS OF NO-HOLDS-BARRED ACTION ON EACH CHANNEL, EVERY NIGHT! £14.99 PER MONTH, EQUIVALENT TO JUST 4P PER CHANNEL PER NIGHT. EXISTING CUSTOMERS MAY UPGRADE CURRENT PACKAGE. 12 MONTHS MINIMUM SUNBSCRIPTION, PLUS A ONE-OFF STARTER PACK FEE. STARTER PACK ENTITLES YOU TO £30 WORTH OF ADULT MAGAZINES AND VIDEOS. ABSOLUTEL DISCRETION ASSURED! THERE WILL BE NO MENTION OF TELEVISION X OR RED HOT ON YOUR BANK STATEMENT. *per channel per night.

Sony and its effect on the world of videogames

THE HISTORY OF PLAYSTATION

PREVIEW: ▽ INTERSTELLAR MARINES // HISTORY OF PLAYSTATION // BLU-RAY REVIEWS △

EVERY YEAR FEWER

companies make more money from videogames. Whereas once a single programmer could code his or her game, draw the graphics and add sound, you now have EA and multi-million-pound profits. Games have moved from the science labs of Massachusetts to the arcades of the world, into the bedroom via the home computer and into the living room and even the nightclub. It didn't have to happen this way: Sony made it so by sheer force of will and has been reaping the rewards since 1994.

In the Seventies, consoles were sold as enhancers for TVs. You bought a box that plugged into your set giving it the ability to display interactive yet crude graphics. Games were inbuilt as in the 1972 Maganavox Odyssey and so there was only a finite number of games you could play – or rather, there was a finite number of versions of *Pong* you could play. Early ads depicted families staring at the technology with all the awe of an apostle at the resurrection, but with the added bonus of actually being there. If you bear in mind that most TVs at the time could only display black and white, you can appreciate the huge jump forward that a controllable block represented. This was the future and it was covered in wood-effect veneer. An arcade machine in your home. Better living through technology. These games sucked, novelty was everything.

The advent of cartridge-based systems opened the flood gates. Fairchild's Channel F was released in 1975, the same year as the Betamax video recorder, and was the first console to accept games on cartridges, but it wasn't until the 1977 release of the Atari VCS that a true console gained worldwide acceptance. The machine had a user base of 10 million in the US alone and thus represented a huge potential for profits. Enter Atari and the build-up to the death of home consoles.

It seemed everyone wanted a piece of the pie – Spectravideo, Colecovision, Intellivision, Atari – they all wanted to give you the arcade feeling in your home. Or at least they wanted to give you the illusion of the arcade. If you think we're living in the age of licensed drivel, you're wrong. Everyone wanted their product likened to a game. Spectravideo gave us *Chase The Chuck Wagon*, a game based on the best-selling dog food, Chuck Wagon. Kool-Aid gave us *Kool-Aid Man*, available for Intellivision and Atari. The number available titles was staggering, as was their total disregard for quality. This new industry showed the very definition of arrogance when Atari launched the home version of *Pac-Man* in 1981. It was expected all 10 million VCS owners would buy 'the world's most popular arcade game', so they made 12 million cartridges expecting the game to be the killer application to sell another 2 million consoles. Problem was that everyone knew how *Pac-Man* should look and play and they all knew that the cartridge they had just bought was nothing like it. It was dire and many were returned. With cartridges costing between £30 and £40, consumers found that they were being taken for a ride. By 1984, the home computer market had opened up and was attracting console owners disillusioned by the high price. They also had the bonus of making you computer literate.

```
10 PRINT "CONSOLES AREN'T
EDUCATIONAL",
20 GOTO 10
RUN
```

Thanks (no doubt) to Matthew Broderick and Ally Sheedy's F-factor in the 1982 hacking-is-cool film *Wargames*, everyone knew that the home computer had the power to rain nuclear Armageddon. You could code in a game from a magazine of better quality than Activision's *ET: The Extra Terrestrial* – a game so insanely terrible that millions of unsold cartridges are still buried in a land-fill in New Mexico – and you would at least feel as if you were some kind of genius, even if the only program you could ever write on your computer was LOAD 'Pac-Man'.

This lull in the console market kept up until 1986 when Nintendo released the Nintendo Entertainment System in the US. The console (known as Famicom

1995 HIGHLIGHTS PLAYSTATION LAUNCHED IN SEPTEMBER

1995 LOWLIGHTS PLAYSTATION NOT LAUNCHED TILL SEPTEMBER

1996 HIGHLIGHTS SONY DROPS PRICE OF PLAYSTATION FROM £299 TO £199

1996 LOWLIGHTS OBSESSION WITH LARA CROFT'S BOTTOM

KEY GAME

GRAN TURISMO It was released in the US and Subaru started to sell more cars. Are these two facts linked? *Gran Turismo* was game designer Kazunori Yamauchi's dream. He wanted a title that enabled him to drive real cars but in his front room. He wanted to feel powerful over-steer, overwhelming under-steer; he didn't want to smash up a real car, and neither did the many manufacturers that allowed him to 'take pictures but please, mind the paintwork'. The suspiciously glossy (but angsty) soundtrack (Manic Street Preachers' *Everything Must Go* claws over the titles) made it feel like a high-class interactive advert for the automobile.

1996: the year of *Trainspotting*, heroin chic and this slightly controversial *WipEout* ad.

1982's *Wargames* convinced the world that computers could destroy the world.

1995

Sony Computer Entertainment Europe office established in London

Celine Dion raises the question, "Baby, this is getting serious. Are you thinking about you or us?" as *Think Twice* hits the UK music number one spot and the universe shrugs.

Over 1 million PlayStation units sold in Japan

PlayStation gets released in the US and across Europe

SCEE's European TV advertising campaign begins with Society Against PlayStation (SAPS) adverts

JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER

1996

The month in which 34 titles are now available for PlayStation. 18 of them are by third-party developers

Sony Computer Entertainment Europe releases its first in-house title - *Total NBA 96*. *Alone In The Dark: One-Eyed Jack* is released

The price of PlayStation drops by a third to a more reasonable £199. Due to this being 1996, £199 is considered cheap for what is an arcade machine for your lounge

Worldwide PlayStation production and shipment reaches 7.2 million worldwide

Worldwide shipments of PlayStation strike the impressive 9 million mark

MENTAL WEALTH

Don't underestimate the power of PlayStation

Let me tell you what bugs me of the human endeavour
I've never been a human in question, have you?
Mankind went to the moon
I don't even know where Grimsby is
Forget progress by proxy
Land on your own moon
It's no longer about what they can achieve, out there on your behalf
But what we can experience
Up here and of our own time
And it's called mental wealth

1997 HIGHLIGHTS YOU CAN BUY A PLAYSTATION, A MEMORY CARD AND TWO CONTROLLERS FOR £129

1997 LOWLIGHTS MORTAL KOMBAT MYTHOLOGIES

in the East) had been selling well in Japan since 1983, but the crash of 1984 put many US stores off stocking videogames. To counter this fear, Nintendo added the famous Nintendo Seal Of Quality to its games. Then it actually made games of quality featuring plumbers, power-suited chicks and a chap that looks a bit like Snap, Crackle or Pop from Kellogg's Rice Crispies. The machine was a huge success. Nintendo became THE name in home consoles, and the doors were open for others to join in the renaissance. Consoles were up, but it was still a hobby held by relatively few enthusiasts. These people were easy to spot since you'd always find them hiding in the school library behind the Fantasy section during games lessons. Or at least that was how an ignorant majority saw them. The bastards.

In 1988, for the sequel to the NES, Nintendo entered into an arrangement with Sony to develop a CD-ROM drive. This device would use an extension of the CD-ROM format that allows compressed audio, visual and computer data to be accessed simultaneously. Sony also had plans to help develop another Nintendo machine that would play Super Famicom cartridges as well as disc-based software. In 1991 Nintendo announced it had entered an agreement with Phillips instead. Sony only knew this when the announcement was made to the world. Too bad, as it was this CD-ROM/XA format designed and solely licensed by Sony that powered what would be PlayStation. In 1992, Sony, Nintendo and Phillips signed a deal that would allow PlayStation to run SNES CD-ROMS, but left Nintendo with the sole rights to all its games. This version of PlayStation was never released and more work was done on the machine's architecture eventually resulting in the PS-X in 1993.

In 1994, what we all know as the PlayStation entered the world stage. Sony had spent £300 million on development and by August 1998 40 million units were shipped worldwide. Namco and Konami were brought in early, third-party developers were courted and a new breed of advertising was launched.

Note the launch of the Betamax in 1975. This video system was the first on the planet. Compared to VHS it had a sharper picture, a tape-winding mechanism that could switch between modes quickly, Hi-Fi sound didn't cause problems during duplication, and they were smaller. Unlike VHS machines that could be bought almost anywhere, Sony only sold Betamaxes in suitable electronic stores, and the booming video rental market had been lobbied to be heavily in favour of VHS. Once Betamax VCRs were selling well enough, Sony cut back on advertising. At the same time, its VHS competitors were broadcasting their presence from every medium and were becoming the standard by which to watch movies. Want to stay in with a pizza so you and your buddies can enjoy schlock-horror anti-classic *Squirm* on your TV? You'd better have a VHS machine because to select a movie in Betamax format down at your local Flicks video library meant that you had no selection at all. By the Eighties, Betamax machines were the butt of jokes in schoolyards across the land. Even if your mum came to pick you up in a Skoda, without wearing a bra you couldn't get more flak. Sony may have lost out on the dominance of the video market, but it would learn from its mistake. Everyone would desire a PlayStation and they would all want PlayStation software.

At the time of PlayStation's launch the only real competitor was Sega Saturn. It was launched in Japan, November 1994 and sold half a million consoles by Christmas eventually going on to sell over 5 million units, making it more popular than N64. When launched in the US in 1995, it was received with rather less enthusiasm – its launch date was pulled back in order to get machines in stores before Sony. The problem was that Sony had already whetted the appetites of videogamers with its pre-release hype. Magazines had already been pumping out details of what PlayStation could do: 3D graphics, light-shading, CD quality music. The Saturn could handle 3D but was more suited to 2D games and at £400 it cost £100 more than PlayStation. Needless to say, PlayStation out-sold it almost immediately at a ratio of 2:1.

Sony knew about PR. Before the release there had been a TV campaign,

1998 HIGHLIGHTS YOU CAN DRIVE YOUR MUM'S CAR IN GRAN TURISMO

1998 LOWLIGHTS POCKETSTATION MEMORY CARD PDA DOESN'T GET A EUROPEAN RELEASE

RECAP
WHAT HAS SONY DONE FOR US?

1968	**First Trinitron Colour Television**
1971	Colour Video Cassette
1975	**Betamax Video Cassette Recorder**
1979	Walkman
1982	**Compact Disc Player**
1983	Camcorder
1988	**Digital Video Tape Recorder**
1988	8mm Videotape
1995	**PlayStation**

1997

As of St Valentine's day, worldwide PlayStation shipments total over 12 million units across the planet. 2.6 million are in Europe. Net Yaroze console launches in Europe

Would you believe that PlayStation shipments are now 13.5 million units? You should because that's how many it has now sold

SCEE announces the development of the analogue controller. PlayStation becomes official partner of Prost Grand Prix. The analogue controller is announced

SCEE aquire Millennium's Games Development Teams, they are renamed Studio Cambridge whose first game will be something called *MediEvil*

22.5 million PlayStation units now dominate the Earth. 6.1 of them are to be found in Europe

JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER

1998

That's 28.2 million PlayStation units worldwide, people. 7.8 of them are in Europe. 200 million units of software have been shipped. 1,150 titles released in Japan

Sony Japan announces it has established four satellite studios that will be supervised by Akira Sao, executive vice president of SCEI. Polyphony Digital, Aec Entertainment Inc, Sugar and Rockets Inc and Contrail Inc

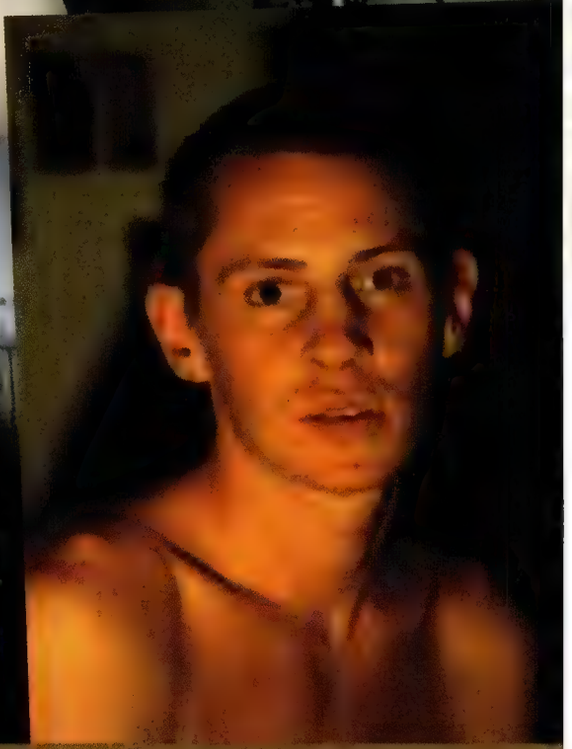
Sony Europe shows off its new DualShock Console Pack featuring the new controller. The console incorporates Soundscope technology that produces graphical effects in tune with a music CD

There are now over 10 million PlayStations in the homes of those in the PAL territories

43.14 million PlayStations have been shipped across the world

DOUBLE LIFE

For years, I've lived a double life. In the day, I do my job - I ride the bus, roll up my sleeves with the hoi-polloi. **But at night, I live a life of exhilaration, of missed heartbeats and adrenalin.** And, if the truth be known, a life of dubious virtue. **I won't deny it - I've been engaged in violence, even indulged in it.** I've maimed and killed adversaries, and not merely in self-defence. **I've exhibited disregard for life, limb and property and savoured every moment.** You may not think it, to look of me, but I have commanded armies, and conquered worlds. **And though in achieving these things I've set morality aside I have no regrets.** For though I've led a double life, at least I can say - I've lived.



"Sony isn't making game consoles - it's making entertainment systems. Its most effective ad campaigns didn't even mention games at all"

1999

16.5 million units in Europe and 50 million planetwide. PlayStation is now the number one game console by a margin of 'wow!'

54.42 million PlayStations now enslave the people of Earth

Sony announces deal with SquareSoft that gives it exclusive rights to SquareSoft titles in all PAL territories including *Final Fantasy VII*

Sony Japan establishes its own company for the production of Graphic Synthesiser chips called SCE Nagasaki Semiconductor Inc. There are now 20.83 million PlayStations in Europe, 58.4 million worldwide

65.21 million units of what? PlayStations? Across the entire globe, you say? And what of Europe? Ahh. 24.84 million. Thank you

Now there are 25 million PlayStations in the homes of the PAL territories. And Israel is in Europe because it uses the PAL television standard too...

JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER

2000

71.82 million PlayStations now occupy space on the planet

PlayStation2 launched in Tokyo. It sells over 980,000 units

www.PlayStation.com is created in a move to tap into online sales, and to ready the world for the online potential of future PlayStations

Sony, IBM and Toshiba agree a deal to develop a new kind of chip, one that offers massive processing power. The chip was called Cell, and was the seed that would sprout PS3

Sony Europe announces that it will release the PlayStation 2 in September

The super-cute PSone model PlayStation is released in Japan

PlayStation 2 available to buy in the UK but only if you go through Sony's crazy pre-order system. Everyone else has to wait. Not that it matters: the launch games are rubbish

PSP FOR ME

SONY'S PORTABLE PROTÉGÉ

After Nintendo cast Sony aside back in 1991, the firm hit back with the behemoth that was the PlayStation, blindsiding both Sega and Nintendo and making off with the coveted home console crown. So, encouraged by the phenomenal success of both PlayStation iterations in 2003, Sony revealed it was going for the mother-load and announced plans to enter the handheld market.

Unveiled on 11 May 2004 at E3, the PSP didn't make it to European shores until 1 September 2005 but was a very desirable device - quickly replacing our nads as the number one thing to play with in our pockets. Sony's mini-marvel could play games, movies, several music formats, store JPEG photos and had a web brower - this was going to be big. And of course it was. A strong line-up of launch games and a heavy marketing push helped the PSP to sell 10 million units in just ten months and it marked the fastest penetration speed of any PlayStation platform. Just two years after it appeared at this year's E3, Kaz Hirai, president of SCEA announced the company had shipped 17 million PSPs.

On paper all seems well, new bundles like the Giga Pack and modding elements such as homebrew have helped Sony's handheld flourish, however, with Sony taking its eye off the ball recently it's let a slew of lazy PS2 ports dominate the release list and the UMD format enter its death throws. Naturally, the opposition have looked to capitalise - Microsoft has announced its own plans for a handheld device and Nintendo has made innovation a priority for DS. Despite seeing signs of inspiration in games like *LocoRoco* many industry insiders feel PSP will have to try much harder if it is to challenge DS. Not wanting to lose face, we're certain Sony will return fire with a suitable strategy to make PSP equal FUN and put it at the forefront of handheld gaming.

Sega attempted to ape Sony cool with its barbershop ads.

In the Eighties videogames ads were so much simpler.

billboard posters and adverts directly aimed at the hardcore market. Our sister magazine *Play*, for example, was launched in the UK toward the end of 1994 and was on sale before the UK even had access to the hardware. It wasn't just the specialist press that were getting moist either: adverts were being placed in magazines such as *GQ* and *FHM*.

This new console was being aimed at 20-somethings. This age group would have been old enough to witness the early advertising of the Eighties. They would have grown up with games, but these weren't the people Sony was most interested in. PlayStation architecture spoke for itself. If you were a gamer, you would be buying a PlayStation, no question, your money was theirs – it was just a matter of time. It was the other kids who had grown up through the Eighties that Sony wanted. It was those ignorant jocks that had thought that videogames were for losers who avoid PE lessons by hiding in the school library. This wasn't a game machine – it was a lifestyle product and there's nothing nerdy about that.

Spotting consoles in films and on TV used to be a test, and if you saw one it was usually part of the narrative. The PlayStation, however, was a piece of front room furniture. You may have seen an Atari machine in the movie *D.A.R.Y.L.* but it was just there to demonstrate the amazing reactions of the film's robotic main character. You could spot a PlayStation control pad being used as a weapon in a copy of Nineties comic/lifestyle magazine *Deadline* or simply doing nothing in the background of an episode of Friends. PlayStation was to be omnipresent and a touchstone of popular culture. Sony had made a pastime for the image-conscious.

2003 HIGHLIGHTS PLAYSTATION PORTABLE IS ANNOUNCED

2003 LOWLIGHTS STUNTMAN'S DIFFICULTY LEVEL

WipEout would have been just another racing game had it not been for the work of Designers Republic and the music of Orbital, The Prodigy and The Chemical Brothers. Hiring Designers Republic was a masterstroke by Sony. The hip design company's work was based on subverting the form of corporate logos and advertising, and showed a self-aware and savvy approach that was sweeping the design world and popular culture as a whole. It's no accident that *WipEout* and the movie *Trainspotting* both shared a love of bold, flat colour and cultural references. *Trainspotting* had Underworld's *Born Slippy*, *WipEout* had Underworld's track *Tin There*. Arguably, *Trainspotting* was recognised as much by its soundtrack as for its trite handling of heroin addiction and the same could be said for *WipEout* whose original soundtrack was

2001

Sega announces it will be developing games for PlayStation 2. The gaming giant has pulled out of hardware production completely

Sony and Square go into partnership where Sony will market and sell *The Bouncer* and *Final Fantasy X* across all PAL territories

Sony makes a deal with troubled videogame giant Sega to publish and distribute seven Sega titles

Almost 15 million PlayStation 2s shipped across the globe. In March it was 10. Hot cake, anyone?

PlayStation2 drops in price to £199

20 million PlayStation 2s on Earth. That's so huge we'll use block capitals - 20 MILLION PLAYSTATION 2S ON EARTH

2002

JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER

SCEE is awarded damages against Channel Technology. The company had been modifying PlayStation 2s with chips. If only car-modding came at such a price

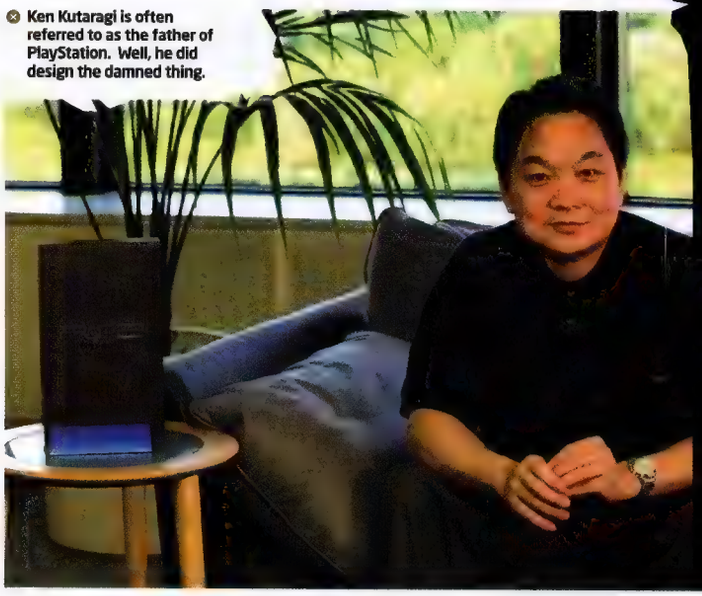
Blu-ray technology is announced to the world. It gains immediate support from Sony, Disney, Apple and many others...

The PlayStation 2 Linux kit is released. 8.8 million PlayStations 2s are now shipped across European territories

***Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty* is released, and the gaming community as well as some magazines that reviewed the 'full code' are surprised to find that Snake is only playable for half the game**

Sony reveals that it has already started development on a successor to PlayStation 2

***Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* is released and men in polyester suits across the world sigh in relief as their fashion finally comes back into vogue**



Ken Kutaragi is often referred to as the father of PlayStation. Well, he did design the damned thing.

KEY GAME

TEKKEN If we were an evil financial corporation we'd do what the Mishima Zaibatsu Group did and sponsor a balls-to-the-gravel, no-holds-barred, to-the-death martial artsy tournament where the world's greatest fighters could meet and beat each other for the chance to kick an old man, but that's just because we're desensitised to violence. 3D arcade-quality beatings made men feel easier when spending long periods together saying nothing and for that, *Tekken*, you'd have our sword until *Soul Blade* took it away.

KEY GAME

FINAL FANTASY VII Didn't get the fuss? You're probably too busy pulling the wings off the flies attracted to your evil eyes to read this. How can you not find the three-disc tale of how Shinra Inc found a way to suck the life force out of the planet and use it to control the universe, or how Avalanche and an ex-soldier of Shinra fight back, pure gravy for the soul? Admittedly, we've had relationships that have lasted longer than the special attacks, but for character, depth, stunning imagery and a world you cared about, wow.

released on CD to critical acclaim, confirming the idea that PlayStation was about more than just games. Obviously, *WipEout* is about racing cars and, by nodding towards club culture, in no way borrowed any elements of drug-cool whatsoever.

Sony's marketing team reiterated this fact when its lifestyle press advertising campaign showed two young things as they chilled out in front of their TV. They look wasted and blood was dripping from their noses. Obviously the speed rush felt when you played *WipEout* was too much for their mucus membranes to take. That, or they've just snorted a nice long line of Horse. The courting of the clubber went even further. Hip magazines such as *The Face* and *Sky* you know the type of rag, ones that alternate between being 'The Drugs Issue' or 'The Sex Issue'. They were sold with special advertising inserts printed on special paper. Smart graphics based on PlayStation iconography didn't blind you to the truth. Perforated lines described areas to be torn out – this was roach paper. Thinking of smoking a joint? Don't forget your PlayStation.

This new approach to marketing a console widened the potential buying demographic to previously unthinkable levels. But just as Sony had created and then opened its own door that had managed to close the competition's, Nintendo's insistence on using cartridge-based hardware for N64 meant that the machine wouldn't have access to the same level of aural and visual garnish afforded to PlayStation. Cartridges load faster, but they're more expensive and they can't blare out an Underworld track. Fans of the SNES (which, as we've said, could have been disc-based if Nintendo had wanted it) would know of the quality of Nintendo's software, but newcomers would just see a basic game machine.

Lara was as much a part of 'Cool Britannia' as Blur, Alexander McQueen and Damian Hirst.

PlayStation was a 32-bit machine, Nintendo 64 was... 64-bit. Who cared? Technical superiority is nothing compared to the power of digital quality music, FMV and an acceptance by the fashion-conscious opinion formers. Two words: Play and Station. Its very meaning is open to interpretation and it refuses to dictate its own meaning. Walkman said nothing of music, but shouted freedom. PlayStation is your gateway to 'Play'. It's all about you – how very Nineties. How so against the insinuation of the name Dreamcast, a machine that, by its own benevolence, gives you, the public, dreams. To quote Chris Cunningham's Mental Wealth TV advert, "It's not about what they can do on your behalf... land on your own moon."

Even right at the end of its lifespan, when the PlayStation had been redesigned as the smaller, cuter PSone, it managed to outsell the competition at an impressive rate. Sega launched Dreamcast well before Sony's PlayStation 2. It was online compatible from the box, allowed you to view Internet pages and even featured a natty zoom feature that allowed for the study of pornography. Add that to a machine with higher technical specifications than the PS2 and mix with some Sony-esque abstract lifestyle advertising and there you have... a machine that didn't sell very well. You can now buy a Dreamcast for less money than a cartridge of *Pac-Man* would have cost you 15 years earlier.

There's no argument about the fact that PlayStation 2's launch titles were less than inspiring, especially considering the quality of the technical demos that were handed out at shows across the planet. But Sony had something elusive to Sega. All its ads had to do was flash up a triangle, square, cross and circle and an audience would already

2004 HIGHLIGHTS THE SHEER SCALE OF GTA: SAN ANDREAS

2004 LOWLIGHTS DRIV3R REARED ITS UGLY HEAD

2003

Worldwide shipments of a certain black console have hit the 50 million mark

Sony announces an all-in-one portable entertainment platform called 'PSP'. It's set for release in the fourth quarter of 2004

The PlayStation 2 broadband gaming service is launched in the UK with only two games – *SOCOM* and *Twisted Metal Black Online*

Sony Computer Entertainment Australia wins its appeal against Eddy Stevens. Mr Stevens made the mistake of selling silicon chips that enabled users to play pirated games. Boo!

PS3 concept shots start to appear on the Internet – they look pap

21 November *Prince Of Persia: Sands Of Time*

Sony registers the domain names playstation3.com, playstation4.com and playstation5.com. A PS3 logo surfaces but turns out to be bogus

JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER

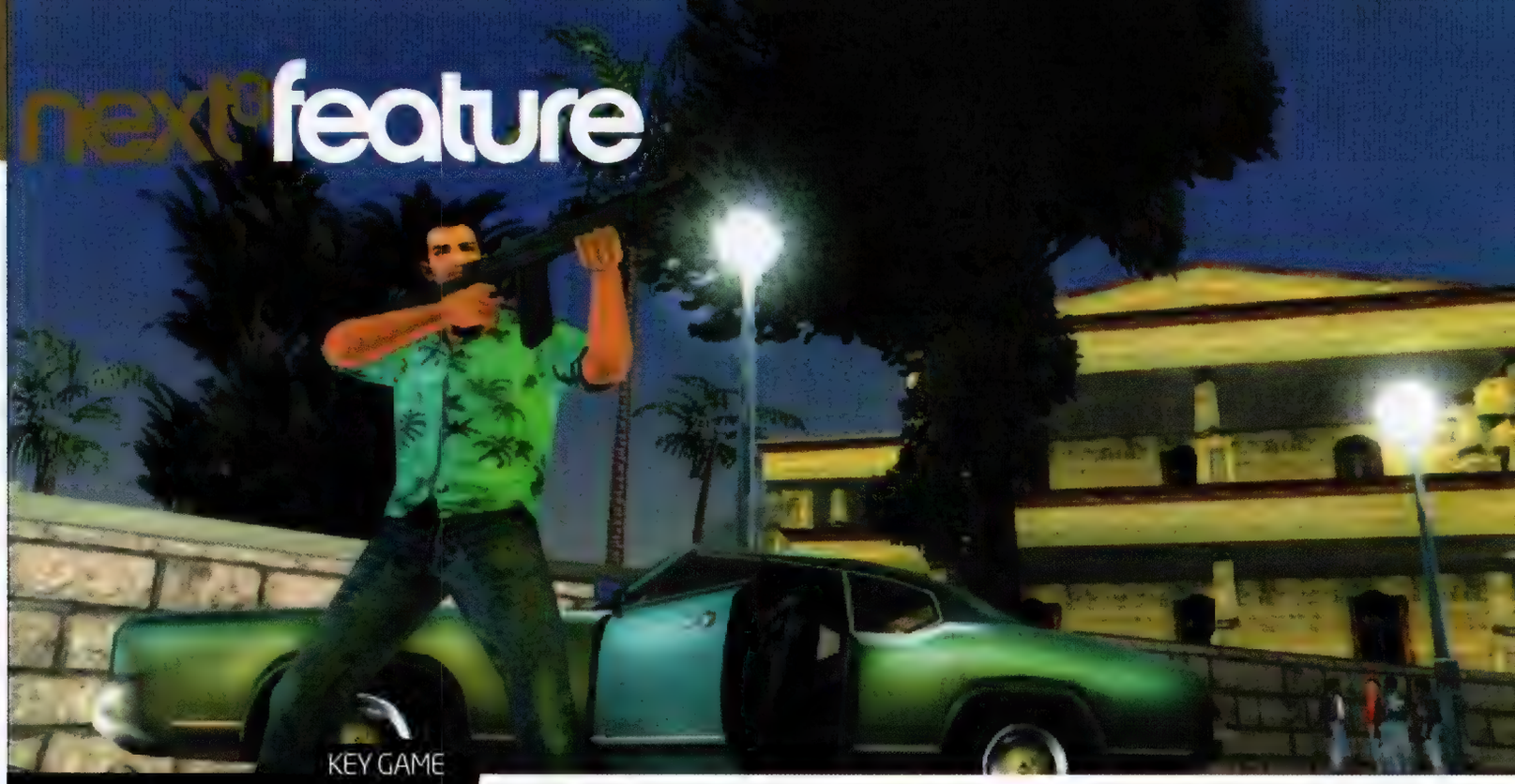
2004

Driv3r is released and becomes the most returned videogame in recent memory

Sony announces that its eagerly anticipated Cell technology will be unveiled at next year's E3... excitement ensues

Sony confirms PS3 will incorporate Blu-ray technology

Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas is released to a public that has no idea what the word 'epic' actually means. It sells 1 million copies in the UK in eight days.



KEY GAME

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY The loading screen was designed to look like the loading screen of a Commodore 64. That's how you start a game that's a tongue-in-cheek homage to the Eighties, no contest. While *GTA III* had Liberty City and a genuine sense of being, *Vice City* had another trick that games had never capitalised on before. It made you nostalgic. Not a bad trick for a game that looked so modern. A truly remarkable one when you consider it had the same effect on kids whose childhood memory includes staying up to watch Boyzone dancing like electrified male strippers on *The Late Late Show*. It was also better than 98 per cent of TV from the period it aped.

KEY GAME

PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME Seven is when you're at your safest age to play your last game of Dare. Any older and you'll face injury, death or a court order. *Prince Of Persia* gave us the chance to make giant leaps without a care and the ability to mess with a woman's mind for eternity without guilt. It was the reason people used to go and watch Douglas Fairbanks Jr in *Sinbad* movies, the reason you used to jump off swings when they were horizontal and the chains squeaked in a worrying way. It also shimmered like a holy relic and featured a natty time-reversing trick.

2005 HIGHLIGHTS THE UK LAUNCH OF PLAYSTATION PORTABLE

2005 LOWLIGHTS XBOX 360 ARRIVES ON THE SCENE

know what they were talking about, and it was something more than just a system for playing games, it was a 'lifestyle'. Sega's big advertising campaign tried to show off the machine's multi-player and online capabilities but without actually showing off any games, instead opting for an advert where barbers race each other to give the quickest haircut. This approach works if your product already has recognition. Too bad then that the majority of people who would buy a Dreamcast knew of their appreciation of Sega years before, while the new breed of game player didn't care. They just wanted a machine that plays games and thanks to Sony's marketing approach, they had one. At that time, DVD players had yet to reach the saturation level of VHS recorders, but they came as standard on a PS2. The machine could also play existing PlayStation games. This meant that if you owned a PlayStation, were only mildly interested in it and wanted a DVD player, PlayStation 2 was for you. Many Japanese consumers' first experience of watching movies on a Digital Versatile Disc was thanks to their PS2. Sony isn't making videogame consoles. It's making entertainment systems. Some of its most effective advertising campaigns didn't even mention games at all, instead pulling back to the wider concept of 'Fun'. Even those who have never heard of Squall Lionheart want to have fun. In fact you'll be hard pressed to find a single person on the planet that doesn't want fun. You'll be hard pressed to find a single person who can't understand how to play EyeToy.

This mass-market approach divides yet binds us. Some will argue that Nintendo is "all about the games", which is fine and true, but games are about having fun and fun isn't limited to games. You can have fun playing, or watching, or listening, or washing imaginary windows. When you have such a large and varied user base as PS2, you have the chance to release a flood of rubbish videogames as well as titles of quality and uniqueness. You can sell to the chavs who like nothing better than a spot of *Need For Speed* washed down with a few cans of Rat's Piss, and you can sell to the more refined gamer. Best of all, you can experiment with titles like *Parappa The Rapper* that don't cost much to make and may only sell to a small percentage of PlayStation owners. One percent of 60 million is... a lot. Fun, for everyone. By accepting the dirge, you get access to the cream. So no one bought *Rez*. So what. You did, and you know that you wouldn't have been able to if it wasn't for the

2006 HIGHLIGHTS PLAYSTATION 3 LAUNCHED IN THE UK

2006 LOWLIGHTS DEMAND FOR PS3 OUTSTRIPS SUPPLY

2005

The very first footage of PS3 is revealed to the world at E3. Pre-rendered movies of *Killzone*, *Getaway* and *MotorStorm* are screened and a release date of spring 2006 is announced

The first footage of *Metal Gear Solid 4* was shown at the Tokyo Games Show. Capcom announces *Resi 5* and *Devil May Cry 4*

Rumours begin to circulate that PS3 will miss its slated release date. Sony refutes the claims

JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER

2006

PS3 appears at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas

Sony holds a press conference revealing that PS3 will be launched worldwide in November 2006

Phil Harrison confirms that PS3 will be region free and comes with a completely new controller

Its revealed that PS3 will come in two versions (20GB and 60GB HDD) and the prices are set

The first Blu-ray players and discs hit shelves in US

Sony launches the PlayStation 3 website

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN Who would have thought the last days of man would be decided in Grimsby? In this exciting new FPS, Britain and the US team up in a last-ditch effort to save the world from a scourge. In mere decades, the Chimera – a species of unknown origin propagating a virus that converts other life forms into more Chimera – has overrun most of Earth and now the hope of humanity rests in your hands – yeah, good luck with that. A new IP for a new generation of consoles, this is looking likely to give us a taste of what PlayStation 3 is all about: epic environments, sleek visuals and plenty of shooty-shooty online play. Resistance is futile, you must play this game.

KEY GAME

"Sony had something elusive to Sega. Flash up a triangle, square, cross and circle and an audience would just know..."

swathe of everyday people who just want a quick game of *FIFA* before they pop out for an evening of (at this point we realise we have no idea what people do when they're not playing games) drinking down the local.

We've looked to the past and the present, but what can we possibly know about the future? A console of the late-Seventies would sell because of the novelty of the pastime. Through the Eighties, the 2D graphics of the available systems kept the 'hobby' firmly in the realm of the 'nerds' while the acceptance of 3D worlds and nad-busting drum and bass music by the majority made the original PlayStation more significant than The Maganavox' Odyssey was in 1972. The PlayStation 2 is, simply put, the same machine with nicer graphics and the ability to play movies and CDs. The future of home videogame entertainment isn't in higher graphical resolution, or 11-dimensional sound, those values were only the catalysts that helped grab the attention of a wider public. Over the years they have been educated and slowly introduced to videogames as a viable pastime. 'They don't want no education and they don't want no thought control.' They don't want videogames from the arcade because they've been able to play games more involving than those they could find at the end of a pier for almost ten years.

Games can now exist on their own level without embarrassment. Dad doesn't need to believe they're educational anymore because dad was the kid who used to make the same excuse way back in 1982. People now accept that they can be fun. Simple as that. They want fun in their front rooms, they want a device that gives it to them in as many varieties as possible. And so we have the PSX, a PlayStation 2 mixed with a digital television recording system. Like the first machines, the PSX is being sold as an enhancement for your TV.

The PS3 will follow the same philosophy of being an entertainment system. This causes militant videogame connoisseurs to froth at the mouth and occasionally at the nose. A console should be a dedicated machine for playing games. Marketing is bad. Third-party software is bad and if they wanted a holographic DVD projector they'd buy one separately thank you very much. This attitude would have kept us playing *Pong* on a black and white TV. Interconnectivity and choice, that's what we want, and that's what Sony will give us.

PlayStation 3 is the apex of all that we have mentioned: high-definition movie playback, online play, downloadable films and music, a wireless multimedia hub, handheld connectivity, Internet browser, hard drive, HDMI and video chat. Sony Computer Entertainment is producing one machine to replace another five that Sony itself could have sold you separately. The future is far from set, the next-generation console war is brewing and if we're honest Microsoft and Nintendo are shaping up to be formidable opponents, but to quote an advert for ColecoVision from 1983, "You know, I don't just want to play games." No, but you do just want to have fun and with PlayStation 3 that is exactly what you are going to get.

KEY GAME

METAL GEAR SOLID 4 We had to have one *Metal Gear Solid* game so why not the one to eclipse all the rest. Kojima's new born will complete the Solid Snake trilogy and give us some closure the greatest PlayStation franchise ever developed. The recently released trailer suggests Snake will commit suicide at the end of the game, ending the Big Boss bloodline forever. Then again Kojima threatens the end of the series every other fortnight, so don't expect a definitive full stop.

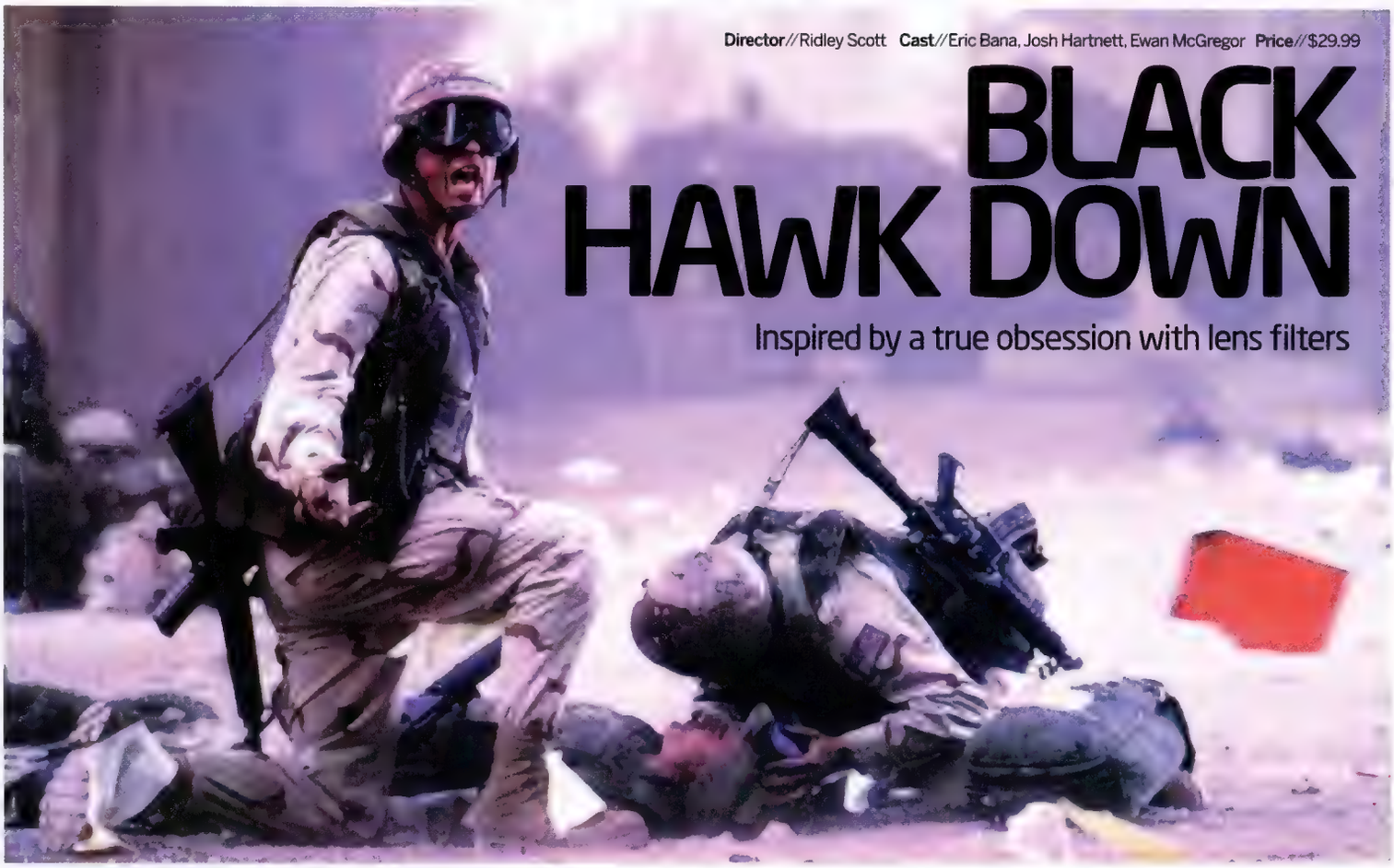
Set shortly after the events in *MGS2* the reformed Foxhound organisation is fighting a massive mercenary army lead by Revolver Ocelot. Plenty of classic characters return to bid their farewells but if Snake's days are numbered who will survive to continue the fight?

Blu movies

YOUR NEXT GENERATION MOVIE GUIDE BIBLE

Rating guide

ESSENTIAL	★★★★★
ROCKING	★★★★
GOOD	★★★
BARGAIN BIN	★★
BIN FODDER	★



Director//Ridley Scott **Cast**//Eric Bana, Josh Hartnett, Ewan McGregor **Price**//$29.99

BLACK HAWK DOWN

Inspired by a true obsession with lens filters

ABOUT//

Every so often Channel 4 will do its 50 Greatest War Movies Of Forever and this 21st century offering from Ridley Scott will usually feature quite highly. To many this is a fair tribute to one of the most military-accurate films of all time, but to us it's just another example of those who vote for these shows getting it drastically wrong.

Recounting the true story of some American troops trying to stay alive after their helicopter was shot down in a war torn country, we'd argue that *Black Hawk Down* actually has as much in common with Mel Gibson's *The Passion Of The Christ* as it does something like *The Bridge Over The Rive Kwai*. In much the same way that Gibson's film seemed to feature nothing but an anal reconstruction of a crucifixion, *Black Hawk Down* is only ever concerned with detailing the combat specifics of the event it chronicles – real drama and character are forgone in favour of painstaking realism, the film much less a gripping thriller than it is a tedious re-enactment.

Essentially a series of set-pieces, *Black Hawk Down* lacks any of the depth or excitement that all the great war films have had. It feels as though Scott is merely satisfying his lust for the big, the bold and the brash in an unrelenting fashion, offering his audience nothing more than well-advised action sequences and a squad of characters who are barely have the credibility to feature in *The OC*. The hideous music-video editing and hyperactive cinematography that Ridley Scott and his brother Tony are so fond of don't help matters either.

Videogames developers were no doubt inspired the day they saw this, but we still believe that great war movies are about more than just combat. Unfulfilling, shallow and cold, *Black Hawk Down* is certainly not one of the greats. ★★

PICTURE QUALITY

It perhaps comes as little shock to learn that tech-savvy Ridley Scott's first movie released on the Blu-ray format is about as pristine a transfer as you'll find. Razor sharp detail and flawless colours are the order of the day, the sweeping blues and cutting light effects of *Black Hawk Down* working tremendously in HD. It's strange to think that though the restless photography is usually a huge distraction, here it finds a purpose – to demonstrate the glorious capabilities of the new format. And here we were thinking that Scott's obsession with lens filters was of no good to anyone. ★★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

The first few moments after the *Black Hawk* is downed.

Director//Brian Helgeland **Cast**//Heath Ledger, Shannyn Sossamon, Paul Bettany
Price//$27.99

A KNIGHT'S TALE

Unsurprisingly, this didn't win any awards for historical accuracy

ABOUT//

Sometimes cute ideas don't pan out. Take the recent *Churchill: The Hollywood Years* as an example: on paper it's no more or less intriguing a concept than *A Knight's Tale*, but it fails miserably. However, *A Knight's Tale* works, the Middle Ages-meets-MTV tone a refreshing approach to what is a safe yarn about a peasant who fakes it as a knight to win the heart of a lady and a bit of dosh.

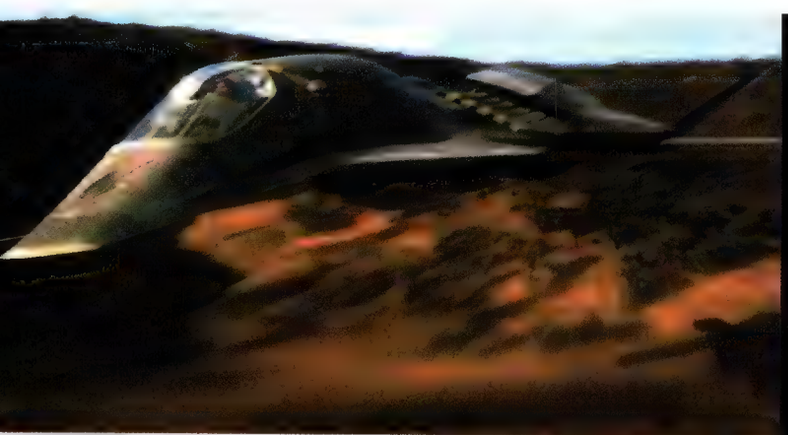
Ledger is able enough in the lead role, whilst the supporting talent do their best to gobble up the scenery, and there's no one more guilty of this than Mr Bettany as Chaucer. It's the good humour of the film that does most to win you over, the script choca-block with lines to make you chuckle and ideas to make you smirk. ★★★

PICTURE QUALITY

The cinematography works better than on BD, although there's a slight glaze that stops this being as crisp as some of the other BDs. Still, it's very solid and the jousting scenes look wonderful. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

The banquet dance. HD enhances the costumes gloriously.



Director//Rob Cohen **Cast**//Josh Lucas, Jessica Biel, Jamie Foxx

STEALTH

We're guessing Foxx signed up before he made Ray

ABOUT//

This is not the film you want to be seen in if you've just won an Oscar. It's not the sort of film you want to be seen in full stop. And yet here is Mr Foxx, statuette on the shelf, in one of the worst blockbusters of recent years. If ever there was any doubt of this movie's standard, consider this: in an introductory segment, we see Josh Lucas studying hard in his military quarters, Biel doing the same, and then Foxx moonwalking, wearing sunglasses, spinning a basketball on his finger and reading at the same time. If he'd been wearing golliwog make-up, it would have made no difference.

This diabolical standard is indicative of the rest of the movie's quality, the plot centring on our heroes' attempts to take down a stealth fighter plane that went loco after being hit by lightning. You could almost forgive it for such a terrible premise if the action was any good, but unfortunately that's not the case. Instead we're lumbered with seen-it-all-before set-pieces that would have looked out of place in the Eighties. Avoid at all costs. ★

PICTURE QUALITY

Despite us slowly growing accustomed to BD picture quality, the superiority of the format is still plain to see. The detail here is superb, as is the strength of the colours. The only criticism is a slight grey tone to the picture. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

At its best when the lightning hits the

ABOUT// Now here is a film that most will watch as nothing more than a brilliant action movie about a shot-to-pieces Detroit cop who's turned into a robot and goes about stopping perps and figuring out just what the hell all his directives mean.

A fair perception, but it's more than that, or at least it can be appreciated in other ways, one of which is as a commentary on the advancement of technology and its dehumanising effects. Take, for example, the scene which sees the goliath law enforcer, Ed-209, chase our cyborg hero down the stairs. Not only does it work as an exciting set-piece (one of many), it argues that sensitive technological progression is always a superior alternative. Or something. Well what it actually says doesn't matter, the point is that this film has more depth and more intelligence in its first 20 minutes than most other blockbusters do in their entire running time. This, together with its extreme – but well-handled – violence and thick black humour, makes Verhoeven's

Director Paul Verhoeven **Cast** Peter Weller, Kurtwood Smith, Nancy Allen

ROBOCOP

The greatest movie of 1987

RoboCop one of the best science fiction films of the past 20 years, if not the very best. ★★★★★

PICTURE QUALITY

The metallic blues of the film work wonderfully well with the colour-capabilities of Blu-ray, whilst the detail seen in our hero's exoskeleton helps it be as impressive as it was nearly 20 years ago. Again, the improved picture only highlights the more obvious ageing effects. Bloody double-edged swords. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

The execution of Murphy has never looked gorier... which is a good thing

Director//Jonathan Hensleigh **Cast**//Thomas Jane, John Travolta, Will Patton

THE PUNISHER

Absolutely nothing to Marvel at

ABOUT// So it goes that we must take the rough with the smooth, meaning that for every *Spider-Man* there's an *Elektra*, and for every *Hulk* there's a *Punisher*. Telling the tired story of an ex-soldier's revenge on crimes committed against his family, this Marvel Comic adaptation is arguably the worst of the recent lot. Clumsy when it should be stylish, silly when it should be smart, *The Punisher* is a terrible film, made all the more annoying by both its adoring fans apparently obliviousness to its awfulness and by John Travolta's embarrassing turn as the pipe-smoking villain of the piece. ★

PICTURE QUALITY

Very well done. The film's visual tone lends itself well to the format – your appreciation of which may even lead to think that this is bearable. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

The attack on the bad guys' HQ. It may lack any thrills, but at least it looks great.

Director//James Wan **Cast**//Leigh Wannell, Cary Elwes, Danny Glover

SAW

Game on

ABOUT// Something's happened to the horror genre recently. Not so long ago *Scream* was pleasing multiplexes with its straight-forward slash-'n'-shriek formula, but somehow that changed and it's all about hundreds of gallons of blood and 17 pounds of guts. *Saw* is the archetypal example of this type of horror, with scenes of seemingly mindless violence sewn together by a thin 'appreciate-life-or-die-horribly' plot. There are some inventive moments, and the twist isn't too awful, but come the end you're just left feeling entirely unfulfilled and pining for the days of Neve Campbell running away from a nutcase in a sack. ★★

PICTURE QUALITY

A very decent transfer of a film with that gritty quality which works so well in high-definition. The blood-red colours of the film have never been so bloody or, er, so very red. ★★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

Any sequence set in the bathroom, the two victims covered in blood and sweat and feeling loads of super-oh-my-god-this-is-so-scary tension.

Director//Michael Caton-Jones **Cast**// Sharon Stone, David Thewlis, David Morrissey
Price//$27.99

BASIC INSTINCT 2: RISK ADDICTION

Another sequel goes tits up (or in this case, down)

ABOUT//
Sharon Stone is an intimidating woman. Not only has she a reputation for being a hottie, she has an astronomically high IQ, above 150 if reports are to be believed. She is, however, still human, as she does appear to have aged a bit since 1992. She can take comfort from the fact that she has aged better than the formula for the trite erotic thriller that shot her to stardom in 1992.

Essentially following the same path as the first *Basic Instinct*, *Risk Addiction* sees the fictional author murdering in London and wooing men into a web of deceit and crime. It feels like one of those Shannon Tweed movies Channel 5 used to put on late on Friday nights, only with bigger production values and even less sense of what it's there to do. Erotic thrillers have two jobs to do: one is to be erotic, which this isn't, and the other to thrill, which this doesn't. It's just a series of awkward scenes featuring an over-the-hill actress trying to claw back the years by seducing men who look like they should be in an episode of *The Bill*. ★

PICTURE QUALITY
A sound transfer but the film doesn't demand it. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE
The scene with Stone trying to be sexy and not old. Oops, that's all of them.

THE BENCHWARMERS

They're called that for a reason

Director//Dennis Dugan
Cast//David Spade, Jon Heder, Rob Schneider **Price**//$27.99

Now if this isn't a who's who of weak comedy sidekicks, we don't know what is. Seemingly made on a whim and without a script, *The Benchwarmers* is that thing we all hate to be near: a comedy without the laughs. Childish, ugly and pointless, this underdog tale of a bunch of misfits should only be bought if you want to lend it to someone you really hate. ★

PICTURE QUALITY
Excellent colour and detail. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE
The final match, but really it's like picking your favourite corpse at a morgue.

ULTRAVIOLET

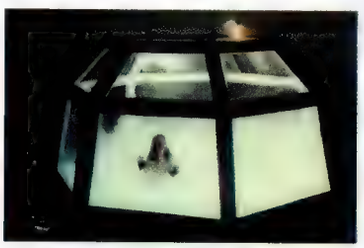
Well it's certainly ultra something

Director//Kurt Wimmer
Cast//Milla Jovovich, Cameron Bright, Nick Chinlund **Price**//$29.99

We were baffled when we learnt how Kurt Wimmer got another job after the woeful *Equilibrium*, but then again it seems as though Hollywood will remain an enigma to us, as pap like this continues to get made. It's another film about a war between vampires and humans with nothing going for it except a clear understanding of the colour violet. ★

PICTURE QUALITY
The minimalist sets hardly demand much from BD. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE
We really did try to think of a scene from it that we liked.



SPECIES

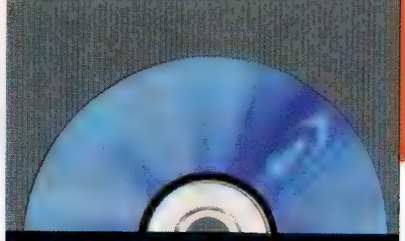
This actually spawned sequels...

Director//Roger Donaldsont
Cast//Natasha Henstridge, Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen **Price**//$25.99

An alien comes to Earth, grows up under the eyes of scientists and escapes to have sex with men before killing them. That's the plot out of the way. *Species* lacks both the inventiveness to be scary and the style to be sexy. It has a strong cast, but all are under used. Mostly dross. ★

PICTURE QUALITY
Okay. The lack of visual impact inherent in *Species* makes it difficult to judge the real quality of the transfer. ★★★

BEST BD SCENE
The laboratory offers the most aesthetically, so any scene set here.



COMING SOON...

Spider-Man
1 A super-hero movie that sets the standard for others to follow.

For A Few Dollars More
2 The second best spaghetti western on the best format.

First Blood
3 Excellent post-Nam action flick. Go Sly!

Reservoir Dogs
4 Tarantino's breakthrough movie comes to BD.

Total Recall
5 More sci-fi excellence from Paul Verhoeven.

The Bridge On The River Kwai
6 A tremendous war movie with a cast to match.

Desperado
7 Rodriguez's *El Mariachi*-inspired spectacular meets 1080p.

Batman Begins
8 This should be great on the next-gen disc.

The Matrix
9 You know it's the one we're all waiting for.

Unforgiven
10 Another Clint western takes advantage of BD.

consolewerks

PS2, Xbox, PSP & Nintendo

Professional Repair Service

01268 590308

www.consolewerks.co.uk

www.buy-ps3.com

Gamez Gecko

www.gamezgecko.co.uk

FREE POSTAGE!

All the latest games for all Playstation and Xbox 360 consoles

Pay as you go game rental
Just £9.99 a month

14 day free trial
No late fees or due dates

game zone

MOBILE FUN!

its easy to order:

TxT THE ITEMCODE TO 88011

e.g. NZ85635 (found at the top of each game)

Join Game Zone for just £4.50 per week (all games require a WAP enabled handset). Don't want to subscribe? Simply reply STOP after your order to unsubscribe, free of charge.

Best Games Best Value

Mobile Gaming is Ready!

Freebie

Lara Croft Strip Vid

MOST POPULAR GAMES

NZ85792

NZ85634

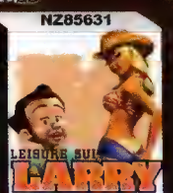
NZ85630

NZ85617

SEXY GAMES

NZ85635

NZ85631

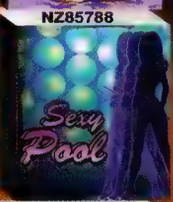


NZ85814

NZ85031

NZ85777

NZ85788



NZ85818

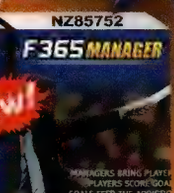
NZ85658

PREMIUM GAMES

NZ85819

NZ85743

NZ85752



NZ85794

NZ85795

NZ85805

NZ85744

NZ85691

NZ85770

NZ85119

NZ85796

NZ85768

GameZone is a subscription service charged at 3 x £1.50 per week until you reply STOP to 88011. All games require a WAP enabled handset, for compatibilities please refer to www.blingmob.com. Customers will incur normal operator WAP browsing charges. For customer support email help@blingmob.com or call 0873 083 1180

BCM Box 2621, London, WC1N 3XX Calls cost £1/min at all times All calls are recorded

LIVE 1-2-1
AT IT'S BEST!
STRAIGHT TO THE ACTION-
No time wasting-No callbacks
Up to 80 girls on line now!
We'll put you through to the
girl of your choice. Call Now!
FRIENDLY GIRLS
HOT LIVE TALK
0909 661 3533

BCM Box 2621 London WC1N 3XX.
Calls cost £1/min at all times All calls are recorded

BCM Box 2621 London WC1N 3XX. Calls cost £1/min at all times. All calls are recorded

BCM Box 2621 London WC1N 3XX. Calls cost £1/min at all times. All calls are recorded

BCM Box 2621 London WC1N 3XX.
Calls cost £1/min at all times. All calls are recorded

Please obtain mobile bill payer permission first. This is NOT a subscription service. To stop service text STOP to 83696, please refer to the term's and conditions within the ROXX wapsite. See your handset instructions for info regarding saving, storing and viewing your content. Some content or services may be incompatible with certain handsets. Service only available [illegible]

next3 month

Next3 Exclusive

PLAYSTATION 3 LAUNCH GAMES REVEALED!

At last, the PlayStation 3 launch line up is revealed. But which games are worth shelling out for? Find out next month!

FIRST PLAY F.E.A.R.

PC's finest FPS comes to PS3 – we get hands on

PRE-ORDERS UPDATE All the latest info on PlayStation 3 pre-orders. Get yours before anyone else

Massive in-depth previews

☑ Call Of Duty 3

☑ Virtua Tennis 3

☑ Army Of Two

Don't miss out on our incredible DVD-packed Issue 3. In fact, why not ensure you don't by **subscribing**? Turn to page 62 for details now

only inside no.3

PLAYSTATION **next3**

EXCLUSIVE TO YOU

ISSUE 3 INCLUDES

FREE DVD

ON THE DVD

High Quality PlayStation 3 Trailers

Interviews and behind-the-scenes features

Blu-ray movie trailers

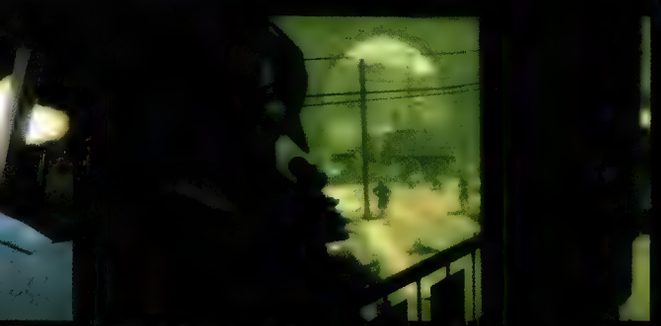
Plus more exclusive content

PLAYSTATION 3

On sale 12 October

Don't miss it!

PLUS: All the latest happenings from the wide world of PlayStation 3



☑ Metal Gear Solid 4

Magic Moments
RESIDENT EVIL
Remembering why PlayStation gaming is the best in the world

1 //Zombie Dogs (Resident Evil) The one everyone remembers. This sequence – where windows suddenly shatter and several zombified dobermans spill forth – is a classic. In fact, it was equally scary in the remake too – as the developers took advantage of nostalgia and changed that whole section (the dogs didn't appear but the window cracked, heightening the tension).

2 //The First Zombie (Resident Evil) A seminal franchise moment. You enter a corridor, the camera angle hiding what resides round the nearest corner. But you hear it: the sounds of teeth biting into something. The cutscene begins: the camera crawls up behind a figure hunched over a dead body. It turns to face you, blood dripping from its mouth. A zombie.

3 //Night of the Living Dead (Resident Evil 4) It takes no film expert to see how influenced the *Resident Evil* series is by George Romero's zombie quadrilogy. *Resident Evil 4* features the biggest nod: holed up in a farmhouse, using furniture to block the doors and windows – wave after wave of angry mobs attacking outside.

4 //Dr Salvador (Resident Evil 4) Dr Salvador is the lovechild of Jason Voorhees (specifically *Friday The 13th Part 2*) and Leatherface, and the first time you get decapitated is one of the best, and most disturbing, moments in *Resident Evil* history.

5 //Nemesis (Resident Evil 3) After battling through the city you finally make it to Raccoon City Police Department – chopper pilot Brad Vickers in tow. Safety from the devastated, zombie-infested city rests inside. Your reverie is shattered when the hulking Nemesis emerges and blocks your way. Flee or fight?

6 //Krauser Vs. Leon (Resident Evil 4) A boss battle that takes place entirely in a cutscene, the player hastily tapping the corresponding buttons on-screen. It's stunning to behold and riveting to endure. *Resident Evil 4* is full of wonderful quick time events – none more so than this.

7 //The Licker (Resident Evil 2) A further example of the Umbrella Corporation's inhuman experiments: horrid, flayed and bloody, its brain exposed and a tongue that would make Gene Simmons blush – its introductory cutscene is classic.

8 //Jill Sandwiches (Resident Evil) *Resident Evil* is renowned for truly awful dialogue, but none more so than this turkey. Having just narrowly escaped death from a descending ceiling Barry Burton tries to comfort Jill by quipping, "Any later and you'd be a Jill sandwich". Smooth, Barry, smooth.

9 //Regeneration (Resident Evil 4) They might not look like much but Regenerators are some of the scariest enemies we've seen in a game. The fact that you have to enter thermal vision to kill them further raises the scare level and the sound they emit is truly terrifying.

10 //Wesker Vs. Alexia (Code Veronica X) Forget the Tyrant, Nemesis or any other monster in the series: Wesker is the ultimate villain and *Code Veronica X* features his greatest moment: after being punched in the face and set on fire by the monstrous Alexia, Wesker proceeds to run up a nearby wall, dive into the air and punch her in the face.

london games festival 2006

in association with CREATIVE LONDON

02 - 07 OCTOBER 2006

A CELEBRATION OF INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT

www.londongamesfestival.com

The first ever London Games Festival, a celebration of everything that video games have to offer, featuring a series of diverse, high-profile events in venues across London. From hi-def cinema tournaments to seminars on how to get into the industry, from celebrity face-offs to a Dragon's Den style pitching event for new game ideas. And of course an opportunity to see, play and win some of the biggest games and platforms for Christmas...

EVENTS

Face-off Tournament
2nd October
www.londongamesfestival.com

Launch Pad
2nd - 7th October
www.londongamesfestival.com

London Game Career Fair
3rd - 4th October
www.gamecareerfair.com

Dragon's Den
3rd October
www.londongamesfestival.com

Cinema Showdown
4th - 7th October
www.londongamesfestival.com

Playing Films, Watching Games
7th October
www.bfi.org.uk

For more information, more events and to register go to **www.londongamesfestival.com**

LONDON DEVELOPMENT AGENCY · BRITISH ACADEMY video games awards · eLSPA Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association · EA GAMES · HMV top dog for music·dvd·games · vue · XBOX · bfi British Film Institute

KOEI

www.koei.co.uk

Fatal Inertia™

PLAYSTATION 3

www.fatalinertia.com

Fatal Inertia and the KOEI logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of KOEI Co., Ltd. ©2006 KOEI Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks are properties of their respective owners. This title has not been concept approved by SCEE.

Made with love by

Our goal is to preserve classic video game magazines so that they are not lost permanently.

People interested in helping out in any capacity, please visit us at retromags.com.

No profit is made from these scans, nor do we offer anything available from the publishers themselves.

If you come across anyone selling releases from this site, please do not support them and do let us know.

Thank you!